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Encounter

MAY 1973

VOL. XL NO. 5

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A TRUE STORY (*story*)	3	*Gillian Tindall*
TO GROW OR NOT TO GROW	9	*E. J. Mishan*
VIET NAM, REASONS & RATIONALES	30	*Alastair Buchan*
COLUMN	38	*R*

AMERICAN CHRONICLE

WHAT IS A UNIVERSITY PRESS WORTH?	41	*Morris Philipson*

THEATRE

MOLIERE A LA MODE	50	*John Weightman*

POETRY

R. S. Thomas 8, *Peter Reading* 29, *James Fenton* 36, *Alan Brownjohn* 37, *Anthony Thwaite* 52, *Michael Longley* 94

NOTES & TOPICS

LETTER FROM FRANCE	53	*François Bondy*
A REBIRTH OF POLITICAL ECONOMY	54	*Samuel Brittan*

BOOKS & WRITERS

DIGRESSIONS FROM LARKIN'S 20TH-CENTURY VERSE	66	*Robert Lowell*
A FICTIONAL SOCIETY	69	*Frank Tuohy*
WHO NEEDS A POETRY REVIEWER?	72	*Roy Fuller*
THE JOHN THE BAPTIST OF MICK JAGGER	76	*George MacBeth*
ON LOSING THE RABBIT	80	*Jonathan Raban*

AUTHORS & CRITICS

THOUGHTS AFTER LONGFORD	86	*Peregrine Worsthorne*

LETTERS 95

AUTHORS 96

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Gillian Tindall

A True Story

MORRIS FENNER was trying to phone his wife, Ruth.

There was something wrong with their telephone at home, had been all the week. When anyone tried to call them it rang, but often only once and then would lapse into silence again so that they weren't sure if they had even heard that one ring. Sometimes it would ring two or three times before losing its voice, but sometimes apparently it didn't ring at all —people complained of having rung and rung and not been answered: they had heard rings but Morris and Ruth had heard nothing. It was, said Morris sourly, great for him professionally; for a freelance journalist there's nothing quite like a phone which sounds to the caller as if you're away or dead or something.

They had been trying to get something done about it for days, but it hadn't been a good week for getting things done. Since Ruth was out at work all day it was normally Morris who managed to be in for the telephone, gas or delivery van. But Morris had been out every day, hanging round waiting for Seamus Lannion to die.

To his numerous acquaintances and contacts, who didn't know Seamus, Morris simply murmured something about it being one of his oldest friends. But, though that was in a way true, he wouldn't have said it to a real friend or to anyone who actually knew Seamus or had known him long ago. To these, he had been saying for a long time that Seamus Lannion had become a pain in the arse these days, a schmuck, an inadequate, a soak, a menace, a sponger—a psychopath. Yes, to Ruth he had said "psychopath," and meant it. But then Ruth knew how much he had once cared for Seamus. She was also the only person among his immediate circle who knew how he had spent the week. Morris was like that.

In point of fact, when their phone had first begun playing up, they had said to one another "I bet that's Seamus again." About five years ago, when Seamus's first wife Jean had finally left him, sick of lies and whisky bottles and lachrymose scenes, Seamus had gone right off beam and had taken to ringing Morris and Ruth up at any hour, either to pour out his heart to them or to lambast them for "taking Jean's side." At first they had been fairly sympathetic and consciously patient and understanding. But as Seamus's demands increased and his temper seemed to grow more and more uncertain, first their sympathy and then their patience had been eroded. Presently they stopped treating him as an equal (a fellow journalist and once, long ago on the *Highgate Echo*, Morris's father-figure) and began treating him like a tiresome three-year-old. Gradually, first abusive and tearful, then patronisingly off-hand, he had drifted away from them. The calls had ceased, and they had been left feeling relieved but vaguely guilty, as if they had failed to rise to an occasion or make an effort they really might have made. Somehow, Seamus always managed to make people feel like that.

But though he disappeared out of their life for a while he came back again at intervals, making calls or visits which were sometimes ebulliently gay, in his best old style, sometimes openly distressed, and sometimes veiledly hostile and threatening—as if, said Ruth acidly, he had been testing them and finding them wanting yet again. And once—this, they had discovered eventually, was after a girl had left him, fed up at last as Jean had been, as so many others had been—he had taken to ringing them up and putting the receiver down after a couple of rings or when they answered. For a long time they had not known it was him, but then Morris developed a hunch—said he could smell the whisky-laden breath

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down the phone—and had said when he picked the thing up for the fourth time that evening: "Seamus you old bugger, if you do this again I'll set the rozzers on you. Straight up, I mean it." And after a brief pause Seamus had answered back in a quite normal voice, and had eventually agreed to come round for coffee and apfelstrudel, and had sat for hours, eating, and telling them quietly all about what a cunning, paranoid bitch his last girl had been. It had been sad, Ruth had said afterwards to Morris, to see the poor thing looking so aged, his hair quite grizzled and his suit hanging on his big, rangy frame: he probably, she said with professional concern, didn't get enough to eat these days: most drunks didn't, and it was that, rather than the alcohol in itself, which ruined their health.

After that evening any shred of respect or awe they had left over for him was quite gone and they no longer believed a word he said. But they felt more kindly towards him again, and protective for the ruin of a gifted man that he now was. They no longer avoided him with contempt, and they even rang him up from time to time to suggest dinner or a movie. By and by, he had got himself a new girl, as he always did—though the girls were half his age now—and life went on. They never did discover what he used for money. The girls, perhaps?—not cynically, but childishly, a man who must be supported in every sense. He tended to go for upper-class girls, as he always had, and most of them seemed to love him, at least for a while. He was hardly working at all these days, hadn't seriously for years, but he still, in his gay moments, retained the most inflated idea of his own talents and market price. Intermittently, in his own eyes, he was still the "brilliant professional" whose big features on gambling, strip-clubs and horse-doping had wowed the readers of the *Dispatch, Sunday Pic,* and *People* long ago in the 'fifties.

Morris wouldn't lend him money (Seamus tried him a couple of times), because Morris never lent anybody money: it was his one practical principle. Oh, the odd quid here and there, of course, but that was just casual, on the pretext of cash for a taxi or sharing a bill. But, at the beginning of that year, he had, unknown to Ruth, relaxed his principle because of two things Seamus had told him. One was that Seamus was getting married again and the other was that Seamus had lung-cancer.

AT FIRST MORRIS had been disinclined to believe either of these pieces of information. As far as he knew Seamus had never got a divorce from Jean. He was, it was true, living with his latest girl, a whey-faced and near-silent 22-year-old with a Greek name and large breasts (Seamus had always had a greedy thing about breasts). But Morris thought that all this about their getting married was probably just Seamus's habitual romancing, extending itself now further and further as a dangerous flowering growth upon reality. And as for that *other* growth—well, Seamus had always been a roaring hypochondriac, demanding attention even in the days when he had been as strong and fit as a horse, 6 ft. 2 in. of blue-eyed, black-haired stage Irishman.

But both things turned out to be true. Jean was apparently letting Seamus divorce her—indeed positively urging him to—because Melina was expecting a baby, and Jean was a very conscientious person at heart. And as for lung-cancer, two weeks after telling Morris about it Seamus was in the Royal Northern having part of his left lung removed.

Morris visited him there and found him very cheerful. The surgeon had used a marvellous new method on him, he said, and had become a great friend too. He was going to be all right and his life was going to be quite different from now on: no more cigarettes, no Scotch, just wine with meals, no more rows, no more nervous tension—it would all be completely changed. Morris felt sad hearing his old friend, who had once been so lovably cynical, talking like this, but when Seamus went on to ask him earnestly if, on the strength of his new and different life, he could borrow several hundred pounds, Morris could not refuse. To be broke as well as doomed seemed too hard a fate for anyone—and then there were Melina and that baby to think of.

In due course they were married in Marylebone Town Hall, with Morris and Ruth as witnesses. Seamus was very grey, but gay. Melina, portly by now, was dressed as the Madonna and still hardly said a word; Morris tried not to feel irritated by her. If she was really the placid, bovine creature she

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seemed, she was certainly going to need her reserves of placidity in the months ahead—though there might not be many months, at that. Seamus insisted on taking them to lunch at Wheeler's, and Ruth said, almost too acidly for a wedding guest, "Seamus, no wonder you never have any money!" Morris felt uncomfortable and wondered if she had guessed about the "loan."

Walking back afterwards to where their car was parked, they said to one another with sad nostalgia, "Do you remember the biscuits?" The biscuits had been when it all began. Morris, as a young reporter trying to leap the gulf between Highgate and Fleet Street ("It's called Hampstead Heath, mate," Seamus had mocked) had managed to get himself commissioned by a dull quality magazine to do some articles on provincial towns. He had picked Reading as a suitably drab example and had slogged off there to look at local industry. On his return, brain-washed, he had begun his piece *"If all the biscuits manufactured in Reading in a single year were laid end to end, they would—"* He was just trying to read his own shorthand to find out how far they would stretch (the statistic had been eagerly fed to him by Huntley and Palmers' PR man, along with Buttered Specials) when Seamus had leaned over his shoulder and typed with one finger: *"they would get very wet."* He "happened to know," as he said jauntily, that Reading had one of the heaviest rainfalls in the South, and he turned out to be right, damn him—in those days he always was. In fact, the editor of the dull quality magazine didn't like Seamus's version—said it was "journalistic"—but for years Morris used to quote it as an example of Seamus's flair. That, and the time when Seamus had, with a poker face, told the Salvation Army girl in the pub that he was worried she might not find Heaven all that she expected it to be: it wasn't, he said, full of old gold and William Morris wrought iron these days; it had been modernised, with synthetics—more durable of course—and the perpetual sound of harps was all canned these days, like the nectar: the old place had changed, just as the Mediterranean and the Spanish Coast had—he just thought he ought to warn her. . . .

"You can say what you like," said Morris to Ruth, "but he really was witty in those days. In his way. He had Style."

"Oh he still does," said Ruth, "in his way. Poor old thing. I'm sure he really is awfully ill, Morry. That look—those mauvish rings round his eyes. Like a lemur. You can't mistake it."

Morris, who had met the surgeon in hospital—a cold, energetic man to whom Seamus was clearly just another case—knew that Seamus was dying, but he had not said so to Ruth in so many words. Morris was like that, and besides, he was more and more afraid of death himself.

Three months later Melina had her baby, also in the Royal Northern. Ruth took her a towelling baby-suit and some daffodils, and reported that Melina didn't seem that keen on the baby really—she just wanted to leave hospital early to get home to Seamus who was, she said, "in bed most of the time, now." She asked Ruth for some money, just like that—she was, Ruth decided, an odd girl, with more to her than they had at first thought, and so Ruth took out her chequebook there and then and wrote Melina a cheque for £50 from her own account. There was always, as she said to Morris when she got home, Social Security—though Seamus, being technically still self-employed, might be having difficulty claiming it, and anyway what that paid would hardly keep him in whisky, let alone anything else—assuming that he was still hitting the whisky, in his decrepit state.

AND NOW, BARELY a month later, Seamus's life was truly ending. Morris had been at their flat most of the day. Melina was there, and the baby, and it cried a lot in a weak, insistent way because it had something Melina called "colic." She kept offering it her white, veined breast, and sometimes it took it and seemed pacified for a while, but then the crying would begin again. Morris kept averting his eyes from that white breast: it attracted him too much—not sexually, but in some other way. He wanted to lay his heavy cheek against it, as if to weep.

Most of the time there was a girl cousin of Melina's there too, a heavy and coarse version of Melina with a disappointed face, who kept washing up cups and saucers. And a District Nurse came and went several times: she was worried because she thought Seamus ought to be in hospital, tidy and alone with screens round him, not in a cramped studio-flat with

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a crying baby and a workman calling at midday to cut off the telephone because the bill hadn't been paid—Yes, really. Morris had been able to deal with that one, fortunately. Doing something, like that, had made him feel marginally better about the whole thing.

Towards the end of the afternoon he went out to try to call Ruth from a public box. She had rung him earlier at the flat, but how could he talk to her there, against the baby crying, against the slow, perpetual rasp of Seamus's breathing? Seamus was dying of gradual suffocation while his wife and his oldest remaining friend and one or two extras looked on. They called it "cancer" to make it sound known and permissible, Morris thought, but it was really, when you came down to it, suffocation pure and simple. He was appalled.

At last, after much trouble, he got through to Ruth. "Are you coming home to supper, do you think?" she asked in a sympathetic voice, and he answered angrily "Of course I'm not—you've no idea what it's like here, or you wouldn't ask such a silly question." He had rung her because he wanted to tell her what it was like, but found he couldn't.

But when he got back to the flat the scene had changed. Everything was quiet. The baby was asleep, the cousin had retreated to the kitchen and had shut the door. The Nurse was packing up her case. The rasping noise had ceased and Seamus's lemurian face was neatly covered with the sheet. Melina sat composedly beside him.

"Doctor will be here very soon," said the Nurse consolingly, adding in response to Morris's uncomprehending look: "To certify death. He has to, you see. I didn't want to leave Mrs Lannion, but now you're back. . . ." Obviously she had a higher opinion of him than of the Greek cousin, and he felt vaguely flattered. At the front door she said to him:

"Do keep an eye on Mrs Lannion, won't you? She's been too calm—hasn't broken down at all. It isn't natural."

"Maybe I should take her and the baby home with me tonight—that is, home to my wife," said Morris, blushing at what he at once perceived to be a Freudian slip.

"Yes, I'm sure that would be best. They can't all stay here. . . ." He understood the delicate "all" to include the object on the bed, and shuddered inwardly. "Usually," the nurse went on, "when someone passes on in a small flat like this we get the undertaker to remove them within a few hours. But Mrs Lannion seems very determined that the body should stay here till the funeral. I said to her 'It's different in a house, where you can set a whole room aside, but really, here. . . .' As I said, though, she seems very determined."

"Yes. I see. She's quite a strong-minded girl, I think."

"Poor thing, ' said the Nurse with mechanical regret. She added: "Anyway I've sent for Mrs Bovey. She does all the home laying-out in this district."

"I see. Goodness." He hadn't realised that still went on. It sounded Dickensian. But then hadn't the whole day been like that? Fantastic, lugubrious—unlike everything else.

TWO HOURS later Mrs Bovey had completed her work to her satisfaction. In a neat, tightly-made bed Seamus Lannion lay, hands clasped, jaw bound, eyes closed, other orifices all (Morris had gathered) discreetly dealt with. When he, Melina and the cousin were suffered to emerge from the kitchen the main room was filled with a smell of unfamiliar hygiene—Ether? Formaldehyde?—although the window had been opened wide.

Mrs Bovey was so small a woman that she just missed being stunted and seemed to belong, simply, to another, squatter race than the normal one. There were other mysteries about her. She might have been anything between 39 and 69: she looked faintly raddled but that might have been just from the excess of make-up she used, particularly the pale pink lipstick with which she enhanced her small, puckered lips. Her clothes were ladylike, almost girlish in an old-fashioned way—pink suit, white gloves, hat of a different pink with a scrap of veiling: everything was very faintly grubby, but only her run-over high-heeled shoes were noticeably shabby; her slightly bowed legs seemed older than the rest of her. She looked to Morris like someone dressed to go to a nearly but not entirely respectable wedding.

"What do we owe you?" he asked her awkwardly. He had no idea if the answer would be £1 or £20. Her task had been trivial, menial—yet how many people were prepared to perform it? Could it possibly be a full-time job, and, if not, what did she do the rest of the

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time? Work in a launderette? Visit betting shops? Care for an invalid mother? Somehow, in spite of the "Mrs", he didn't feel there was a Mr Bovey.

"We discuss the fee outside, dear, if you don't mind," she said firmly, "I never talk of money by the side of the dead. Brings bad luck."

At that moment such a concern seemed redundant, but perhaps Mrs Bovey meant bad luck to *her*. Suppressing a smile he followed her down the stairs and out of the street door. Once on the pavement she turned to him and said in a wheedling voice:

"I tell you what, dear. There's a nice little café just opposite. They do a nice cuppa. Let's you and me pop in there and we can discuss terms in comfort."

Telling himself he must harden his heart to this preposterous little creature, who probably was supposed to charge a fixed rate for the job anyway, he followed her unwillingly across the street and into the workman's café. He ordered two teas. "Would you like anything else?"

"Well thank you, dear. Since you're so kind I won't say no. I'll have a poached egg on toast."

What a nerve, he thought, amused in spite of himself. But then someone doing that job would have to have a nerve, wouldn't they? And why shouldn't she try to exploit him: it was right and natural. He wasn't Melina.

While they were waiting for the poached egg he tried to find out what she did with the rest of her time, but she was evasive. "I love my job," she said happily.

"Really?" He began to think about necrophilia, but she went on:

"Yes. I like to help people, you see. And my job—well, that's really helping them in their hour of need, isn't it?"

Fair enough, he thought, absolutely fair. The poached egg arrived and she attacked it with appetite.

"There is just one thing, though," she said between mouthfuls—her pearly false teeth fitted badly, they were giving her trouble, he saw, and sympathised.

"What's that?"

"Well . . . it's like this, you see." She slid a coy look at him from under her blue-smeared lids. "When I've laid out a poor soul I always like to drive death out—with life, you might say. It's a principle of mine. A bit of fun afterwards. Clears the system. If you take my meaning."

He still had not done so completely—or rather could hardly believe he was getting the message right. Hoping wildly that by "a bit of fun" she might, improbably, be meaning no more than a poached egg and a cup of tea, he said:

"Was—was that why you wanted me to come over here with you?"

"Well yes, dear." She surveyed him with her pale blue eyes, which he now saw to be surrounded by a million tiny lines. She seemed to be faintly amused at his discomfort, but also dubious herself, on the edge of disappointment. "But you don't want to come with me, do you, dear? I thought at first you might—but now I think I was mistaken?"

"I—I'm afraid you were."

"Pity. I like a well set-up man like you. . . . I got a nice room. Homelike."

"I'm sure you have. But—I just don't feel like it, just now."

"Oh yes you do, dear." She spoke now not to persuade him but with an off-hand authority. Returning to her egg with the air of one briskly shrugging off a mild set-back, she explained:

"Everyone does, after a death. It's Nature, you see. Like I said, death has to be driven out. . . . Never mind, dear, I expect you'll find someone tonight you fancy more. . . . Are you taking that poor young girl home with you? She didn't ought to stay in the flat with the body, you know—'Tisn't healthy. There's vapours."

Feeling himself blushing again as he had with the Nurse, he said:

"Look. I'm married. If I want to do—what you suggest—I can."

"Oh well that's all right then, isn't it, dear." She sounded generously pleased for him, and he was filled with remorse. Now the poor little woman would have to find someone else.

"I'm going back to the flat," he said. "Are you—that is, are you staying here?"

"Yes, dear, might as well." The innuendo in her voice was unmistakeable. "I usually do. If not, I'll try Lyons."

"I see," he said. "Well—good luck." He was already making his way to the door when he suddenly remembered that he hadn't after

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all paid her. He had to go back and ask her how much he owed her.

"Oh—just £2, dear." Obviously there was a fixed tariff, and anyway she had lost interest in him. Her eyes were wandering over the other, sparsely populated tables. He slipped two pound notes into her lap, feeling exactly as if they *were* payment for quite other services, then asked on impulse:

"Suppose I had gone home with you? Would that have been another two pounds?"

"Oh *no*, dear." She sounded quite shocked, and at once he was sorry if he had hurt her. "No, that would have been quite free—my treat. Didn't I make that clear?"

"Yes. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked."

"Oh that's all right, dear. Of course, if you want to know, I do have my usual rates. . . . But what we were discussing was a bit special, wasn't it?"

THAT EVENING he took Melina and her baby and a suitcase that seemed to be full of heavy knitting and packets of cotton wool home to Ruth. They dropped the Greek cousin off in Neasden on the way. He felt that Melina, though she still said little, minded very much leaving Seamus alone in his tightly-made bed, and so did he. Poor old Seamus had always needed company so much.

For the first time in years he missed his old friend bitterly—oh not the whining, fibbing, drink-sodden Seamus of the last half-dozen years (no one with any sense would miss that) —but his *old* friend, of long ago, when he and Ruth were young. He missed the Seamus of the *Highgate Echo*, of the Reading biscuits and the Heaven where the William Morris angels were all being put into more up-to-date uniforms, like air hostesses. . . . Oh, there had been a style and originality about the boy, you couldn't get away from it.

Perhaps, after all, his dying hadn't been such a squalid dissolution. Not so entirely out-of-character with his better days. . . . Mrs Bovey had certainly given it something, had rounded it off, you might say. How Seamus would have relished her! Through his sudden crushing sense of tiredness and apathy, Morris felt particularly sorry Seamus was never destined to hear about Mrs Bovey. He would have made such a good story of it.

The Combat

You have no name.
We have wrestled with you all
day and now night approaches,
the darkness from which we emerged
seeking, and anonymous
you withdraw, leaving us nursing
our bruises, our dislocations.

For the failure of language
there is no redress. The physicists
tell us your size, the chemists
the ingredients of your
thinking. But who you are
does not appear, nor why,
on the innocent marches
of vocabulary, you should choose
to engage us, belabouring us
with your silence. We die, we die
in the knowledge that your resistance
is endless at the frontiers of the great poem.

R. S. Thomas

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E. J. Mishan

To Grow or Not to Grow

What Are the Issues?

THE DEBATE on the growth *vs* anti-growth theme has become a fashionable pastime over the last five years. And since its continued enjoyment must depend to a large extent on its inconclusiveness, it would be boorish as well as presumptuous to propose that we try to reach a settled conclusion. Not that I think there is much danger of that happening, however. The reverse is rather to be feared: that the present enjoyment in witnessing the continual conflicts of opinion will become marred by a growing sense of frustration—not so much a frustration at being unable to reach a firm conclusion as a frustration arising from repeated failure to organise our thoughts on the subject and to acquire perspective.

If I interpret the public mood aright, the time has come to steer the debate away from rhetorical appeals and towards more direct confrontation: less bark and more bite is called for. I propose, therefore, that we define the issues more carefully than hitherto and, in the light of these defined issues, lay down the ground rules for a more searching investigation.

The Physical Possibility of Sustained Growth

THERE ARE TWO ASPECTS to the debate that may be treated separately though they will link together in any policy conclusion: first whether continued economic growth is physically possible, and secondly whether it is desirable.

Consider the physical possibility first. Obviously we cannot begin without agreeing on some metric for economic growth. Are we to include population growth? Should GNP, or some variant of GNP, be used? What other indicators are there? Are we to include leisure?

There is another set of questions: Are we concerned with the economic growth of the world as a whole, or are we to confine ourselves to particular areas? And if the latter, are we to make any special assumptions about developments in the rest of the world?

Having agreed, let us suppose, to answers to these two sets of questions, we have then to recognise that there is virtually an unlimited number of possible growth paths. If we are to consider the world as a whole, one in which human population was stabilised at, say, 6 billion people, we might discover—if we could foresee all major technological developments—that an average rate of growth of, say, 4% per annum would entail a collapse of civilisation in 50 years' time, whereas an overall rate of growth of 2 per cent per annum could be maintained for 200 years. Alternatively, we could generate a growth-path that begins climbing steeply, only to taper off in a generation or so, after which it could continue at a low rate for centuries. Or we might discover that a 3% growth rate could be maintained almost indefinitely provided that it was concentrated in certain geographical areas, or provided that certain types of technology alone were utilised, or provided a number of consumer services and gadgetry were scrapped.

I range over these hypothetical possibilities partly in order to uncover our woeful ignorance. We cannot, of course, foresee all major scientific and technological developments over the next few decades, much less over the next century; and we cannot therefore hope to project the range of alternative growth profiles over the future for any group of countries or for the world at large. Perforce, we must for a long time remain content to speculate about less fanciful questions such as whether the world as a whole—assuming its population growth tends to decline so as to become stable after X years—can continue to maintain a

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rate of economic growth of, say, 2 to 3% over the foreseeable future.

The Question of Method

THIS WOULD at first seem to be a fairly straightforward question around which we might profitably reflect; but there are already two questions of method to be settled before giving rein to our imagination. Both refer to institutional and political developments.

First, putting the question whether the world *can* continue to maintain a 2 to 3% growth rate is to transform it into a question about technological possibilities. It might well be that GNP, as conventionally measured, would be perceived to grow at this rate of 2 to 3% per annum *provided* that all resources were properly allocated; which means that all productive services were, in some sense, correctly priced. *Uneconomic* pollution of air, water, etc., would therefore be prevented. Indeed, an ideal allocation might require—in a broader context, and in the absence of all institutions devoted to persuading us to consume more—that all (or nearly all) productivity gains be taken out in increased leisure. This would imply that "real" goods per capita (other than leisure) would not grow, or would grow very little, over time. This resultant "constant-physical-product" economic growth is obviously very much easier to maintain over time than the conventional increasing-physical-product growth, especially where the allocation is so imperfect that pollutants continue to mount.

But are we entitled to make this assumption if there is not, in fact, much likelihood that allocative wisdom will prevail under existing economic and political institutions? True, the question of what *can* be done, of what is technically and economically feasible, is of academic importance. It is useful for informing policy. But if we are interested in the *actual* prospects for the continuation of, say, a 2 to 3% rate of growth into the future, we have to speculate *also* about the likely changes, if any, of political and economic institutions brought about by changes in public attitudes. We have to ask that hard-nosed question: Is it realistic to expect this or that development in the foreseeable future?

Secondly, asking the question whether the world *can*, in a technical sense, maintain this 2 to 3% growth rate for a longish period is to abstract also from present dangers that appear increasingly to threaten human survival. To list some of them:

1. The threat of ecological disruption resulting from larger-scale and more ruthless interference in the biosphere.
2. The threat of genetical calamity arising from increased radiation, and from thousands of new chemicals coming on to the market each year, about whose long-run effects, singly or in combination, we know practically nothing.[1]
3. The increased danger of epidemics, or "pandemics", owing to increased travel opportunities.
4. The threat to human survival arising from the growth of more resistant pests and microbes in response to more powerful drugs.
5. The danger of a nuclear catastrophe, or of annhilation of a critical portion of humanity by more horrible means, as an increasing number of the smaller countries, often headed by fanatics, come to possess the secrets of thermo-nuclear destruction and biochemical warfare.[2]
6. The danger that the post-war trend toward increasing blackmail, violence, crime, and corruption, will plunge society into anarchy (from which it might be saved only by the most repressive tyranny).
7. A related danger, that in consequence of the policy of maximising economies of large-scale operation in sewage disposal, oil refining, water purification, electricity generation, and so on, along with gruesome advances in small-weapons technology, organised survival of the populations of vast urban areas is becoming highly vulnerable to sabotage by ruthless criminals and well-trained fanatics.[3]
8. The threat of internecine warfare, especially within the poorer areas of the world, arising from the continued frustration of expectations—which expectations are aggravated by the growth in tourism, communications, and mass media.
9. The conflicts and unrest within and between countries that may soon arise from the growth in the scale of illegal immigration from the poorer to the richer countries of the world.

[1] We were lucky in discovering the mutative effects of Thalidomide in time. We might not be so lucky next time, if only because the genetic effects of other drugs may take much longer before they are recognised—by which time it might be too late.

According to a recent U.S. leaflet put out by *The National Foundation—March of Dimes*, "seemingly harmless drugs like aspirin, 'diet pills', tranquillizers, 'cold pills', nose drops, and vitamins, are under scrutiny as possible causes of birth defects. . . . The number of new drugs on the market is increasing at an enormous rate. No-one knows just what these can do to an unborn baby."

[2] According to the late President Kennedy, "Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear Sword of Damocles hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness." (From his address before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, 25 September 1961.)

[3] Again, such dangers might be met in time by ceding to governments full powers of pervasive surveillance and control that will be made all the more thorough and effective by scientific progress in identifying, tracing, and incapacitating people. The price of security, that is, will be the sacrifice of an essential ingredient of the good life—personal liberty.

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Again, we are constrained to ask whether we should abstract from these very real threats to our civilisation, or to our survival, in appraising the prospects for sustained future growth. It is hardly to be doubted that each of these threats has risen from economic and technological growth and that each will be further aggravated by economic and technological growth over the future. Though what has happened in the past can be regarded as irrelevant to the question of whether we can, or will, continue to grow in the future, the question about the physical possibility of continued growth is couched in terms of whether *in fact* we shall be able to grow. If so, we can hardly exclude from a consideration of this eventuality the risk of those events which, should they occur, would cripple human society or blot it out completely.

LET ME ADD, in passing, that these dire possibilities are not to be exorcised by jeers of "Doomsdayism". True, history is littered with false prophecies—but not only pessimistic ones. "Prosperity" Robinson, the British chancellor of the exchequer, who in the spring of 1825 assured his countrymen that they were about to enter an era of unprecedented prosperity[4] had only to wait until the autumn of the same year to witness the beginning of what turned out to be one of the biggest economic crises of the nineteenth century, one that was not to lift until about 1830. And American politicians have learned caution from thinking on President Hoover's repeated predictions, after the stock market crash of 1929, of imminent prosperity.[5]

But from the fact that there have been, and still are, millennial prophecies, nothing can be inferred about the future. Calling "Wolf!" frequently and mistakenly does not mean that wolves do not exist. The dangers that exist today, some of which I listed above, are *not* imaginary. Scholars may differ about the magnitudes involved, and about the risks or likelihood of such events occurring. But there is general agreement among them that nothing comparable to such dangers existed at the beginning of the century and, so far as I know, none has argued that the dangers are receding.

Nonetheless, having taken due note of them, I am prepared for the sake of argument to turn away from these very real dangers and to consider the possibility of sustained economic growth in their assumed absence.

Technology, the Crucial Variable

SUPPOSE, THEN, that we can reasonably anticipate a stable world population in the foreseeable future and the question we have to face is whether, irrespective of the distribution of future world product, an average rate of growth per capita of *physical* product comparable to that "enjoyed" in the post-war period can be maintained for the next one or two centuries *in the absence of* the dangers listed above. What should we have to know in order to tackle such a question?

Knowledge of existing reserves of materials chiefly used in modern industry is clearly not enough. Already we have rough estimates of the remaining reserves of coal, of oil (for varying degrees of accessibility), and of a large number of metal ores. And even if they turn out to be underestimates by as much as a factor of 2 or 3 or more, it will make little difference to the number of years required to exhaust them at current rates of depletion. If, for example, world oil consumption continues to increase at a rate of about 10% per annum, accessible reserves (including projected future discoveries) should be exhausted in about three decades. Even if reserves turn out to be as much as 4 times as large as currently estimated, we could keep going only for another 14 years. And if 8 times as large, which is hardly possible, we could keep going for another two decades. On the other hand, coal reserves of varying degrees of accessibility are more plentiful and, if added to oil reserves, could provide us with the necessary energy to

[4] Not all concurred in his opinion however. According to a contemporary observer: "A more curious instance can scarcely be found than in the addresses of Prosperity Robinson and Adversity Hume of the opposite conclusions which may be drawn from a view of a statistical subject where true figures were indisputable on both sides as far as they went." Harriet Martineau, *History of the Thirty Years' Peace.*

[5] Economists, too, are not likely to forget some of the more sanguine forecasts by eminent members of their fraternity; for example, that by Irving Fisher, the then doyen of American economists, in the autumn of 1929 and just prior to the Wall Street crash, that "stock market prices have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau," or the statement by the Harvard Economic Society, in June 1930, that "irregular and conflicting movements of business should soon give way to sustained recovery." In this connection, see J. K. Galbraith, *The Great Crash, 1929* (London, 1955).

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maintain post-war growth rates for another 200 years—allowing for a shift back to coal (in the absence of other sources of energy).

I think there is also general agreement today that we cannot continue to mine a wide range of primary materials *at current rates* for much longer than the end of the century.

Knowledge of economics is not enough either. Economists continue to remind us, unnecessarily perhaps, that as a resource becomes scarcer its price rises as a result of which it is used less intensively. If there is a famine in some part of Asia, grain prices will rise accordingly—though I doubt whether this classical example of the proper functioning of the price mechanism will afford the starving natives much consolation. More generally, and in the absence of other events, a rise in the prices of depleting resources acts to reduce living standards through a rise in the cost of living at some rate over time that depends on physical factors and on economic institutions. True, the rise in the price of a depleting resource is also expected to induce enterprise to switch to substitutes, so cushioning the rise in price of those products that depend heavily on such resources. And it must be admitted that in the textbook constructs these substitutes are unfailingly on tap. Yet in the world we live in we cannot be so sure that our luck in the past will continue to hold. Indeed, it may be unreasonable to expect our luck in discovering close substitutes in the past to continue to hold when all but a few of today's "essential" metals will, if trends continue, be exhausted within 50 years. If *current trends* in consumption continue, all known reserves of silver, gold, copper, lead, platinum, tin, and zinc will be used up within twenty years. There is no historical experience of man being able to find substitutes simultaneously for so large a group of important materials.

We may reasonably conclude that, *were there to be no technological innovation in the future*, then we simply would not be able to continue to grow indefinitely. The earth and its resources are finite, all too finite, and our continued absorption of them on an ever larger scale must eventually exhaust them. The only question would be *when*. And the answers (in the absence of technology) would all seem to fall within the next half-century.

THE CRUCIAL VARIABLE in all optimistic forecasts and in all declarations of faith is technological innovation. We read of existing technical possibilities that are likely to be translated into commercial processes or products. We read also of current technological advances, of being close to a number of "exciting" developments or "breakthroughs", particularly in the field of energy; and we are prone to take heart. For have we not behind us a couple of hundred years of remarkable scientific success and technological achievement? Surely this trend must continue as the base of our knowledge expands?

Fact or Fantasy?

TO A LAYMAN like myself, it is hard to distinguish in these reports—and not all are optimistic—between the elements of fact and fantasy, of reasonable expectation and wild hope. Living in a world that is today being transformed before our eyes by new applications of science, we find it hard to remain sceptical about scientific claims to be able, soon, to release unlimited supplies of energy from granite or water. For there is today an almost irresistible presumption in favour of scientific capability. If it merely sounds possible, the layman is ready to believe it will happen. Thus, we are ready to accept the idea of a vast proliferation of nuclear power plants over the earth, with problems of space solved, and with radiation and heat hazards all kept well under control.

If we are not to run out of materials, however, we shall have to recycle them, so we are ready to imagine also that technology will discover increasingly more efficient (low loss) and inexpensive ways of doing this. And though finite amounts of materials must ultimately limit the period of continued expansion, by switching over time from the consumption of products to the consumption of services we may be able to prolong the period of continued economic growth for hundreds of years.

As for food supplies, the optimistic view is that the problem can be solved by intensive monoculture utilising large tracts of land, and large amounts of chemical fertilisers and pesticides—the methods of the so-called Green Revolution. We are to suppose also that technology will respond promptly and successfully to adverse short and long term ecological repercussions associated with modern "engineering" methods of agriculture—and we are to ignore the social consequences of such agrotechnology on the economy of the hundreds of thousands of Asian

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villages, and the urban problems that follow the disruption of traditional ways of life.

I do not want to sound too cynical. It may all be wonderfully possible, or we may all be wonderfully lucky. I would simply affirm that there is room for legitimate doubt.

The advance of technology in the West over the past 200 years might well be attributable to especially favourable circumstances. Certainly there was no problem up to the present of limits to the assimilative capacity of the biosphere. Nor was there a problem of the availability of cheap fossil fuels. As for scientific progress, we may be running into diminishing returns to scale of research—partly because of an incipient breakdown in communication among an expanding array of narrowly focused specialists. Moreover, it might well be the case that there are no solutions to a number of problems that scientists are working on. It may be that the things we want to be able to do just cannot, in the nature of things, ever be done—though it may take us decades to realise this. Finally, it is possible—alas, more than possible—that should we succeed in wresting some of Nature's closest secrets from her breast, we shall live to wish we hadn't.

So we may well persist in our doubts, and ask again: How sure can we be that soon we shall be able to release unlimited amounts of energy without undue danger? How sure can we be of being able soon to recycle, cheaply and without much waste, a wide range of raw materials? What of the limits of space on increasing earth-travel? And, not least, what of the limits of time on rising levels of consumption?

A sustained per capita growth rate of 3% per annum implies that average income in 150 years' time will be about 100 times as large as the average income today: and 10,000 times as large in another 150 years. Just contemplate the amounts of energy and material required to meet such fantastic standards! Just what shape will expenditures of this magnitude take? And how on earth (literally) will a person manage to absorb them?

The Desirability of Sustained Economic Growth

Assuming that per capita growth could be maintained indefinitely at current rates, we now pose the question whether such growth is desirable.

But "desirable" by what lights? It is possible to assert that knowledge itself, or the power it bestows, is the proper end of human activity. If conceded, there can, of course, be no further debate, since the precondition of sustained economic growth is the growth of knowledge itself. It will not be conceded, however, if only on the ground that, were knowledge and power to be recognised as the legitimate ends of human endeavour, no exception could be taken to making people more adaptable in the future to scientific and technological developments either by computer-interconnection, brain-activating chemicals or genetical engineering—in short, to regarding men as instrumental and subservient to the ends pursued by science and technology.

Alternatively, it may be argued that the growth of knowledge exerts a humanising influence on men, a disputable proposition at any time and particularly where the knowledge that is growing is largely highly specialised scientific and vocational knowledge. Nonetheless, the argument does have the merit of implying a more acceptable end, "humanisation", by which the growth of knowledge can be judged.

But this is only one dimension of a more embracing criterion of social desirability, that of "quality of life" or "the welfare or happiness of ordinary people"—let us, for brevity, say social welfare. Though perhaps vague and extensible, the phrase is meaningful and may be taken to cover a number of dimensions—security, liberty, equity, decency, amenity, serenity. Yet if social welfare is adopted as the touchstone of our enquiry, the enquiry itself may take a number of different forms.

1. We might, for example, be asking the question: Are we getting our money's worth from the rising tide of affluence? If so, the answer is surely no. Even the most conservative economist would agree that a little political initiative would rid us of a lot of unnecessary spillover. Eighteenth-century believers in progress would be astounded at our technological capabilities, and they would be dismayed at what we have done with them. How could we justify the sheer ugliness and abandon of our cities, their endless clamour, litter, stench, tawdriness and desolation? Let us concede that we could have used our enormous wealth to create more sensible ways of living, and pass on to other possible interpretations of the question.

2. We might want to compare the quality or wholesomeness of life today with that of bygone

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ages. And growthmen are ever quick for such comparisons. Yet the comparisons they make are unfair in several ways. They use what little history they know to select the bleaker periods of the past: "the dark satanic mills" and other grim features of the earlier part of the Industrial Revolution being a much-favoured point of reference; or the ancient slave economies of the East; or the imaginary life of an early caveman, "nasty, brutish and short."

Then, they accent those aspects of life which, just because of rising affluence and indiscriminate consumerism, have assumed disproportionate importance in our lives—hygiene, longevity, youthfulness, mobility, instant entertainment, self-indulgence, effort-avoidance. Inadvertently also they fail to stress the features that were common to all pre-industrial ages, the (by our standards) inordinate number of holidays and holy days, the lack of a clear distinction between work and living, and a vaster sense of time and space (owing to slow travel, slow news, and few time-pieces). There were also the great myths that gave hope of life beyond the grave, a more settled way of life, a greater joy in nature, easy access to the countryside—to clean air, to lakes, rivers, quiet fields, and woodlands.[6]

Furthermore, in comparing the quality of life at different periods of history, the notion of some average sort of life has to be abandoned. In all ages, including our own, there are rich and poor, fortunate and unfortunate, and the proportions of these can vary from place to place and from one age to another. A historian may be able to pick out certain periods, over the last 5,000 years, where for certain groups in particular parts of the world life appeared to be good and wholesome, while for a fair proportion of the remainder it was not burdensome.[7] Such comparisons are to some extent subjective and inconclusive, though there may be more agreement among historians on some periods and places than on others. I doubt however whether many historians would agree to the use of GNP as a historical yardstick of well-being, and to conclude, therefore, that life today is transparently happier than it ever was before.

3. We might, finally, be asking if life *is becoming* more enjoyable—or if we are becoming better people, or more contented people—in consequence of economic growth. Bearing in mind the facts of human nature, we could reflect on current economic and social developments in particular areas in the endeavour to obtain clues about the extent to which the modes of living they give rise to accord with, or conflict with, men's biological and psychic needs. And by speculating about technological and economic developments over the foreseeable future, we can debate whether, on balance, we are likely to be better people, or more contented people, over the next few decades.

This looks to me the more promising area of enquiry, and the one I suggest we direct our attention to.

Obviously we cannot *prove* propositions about the decline in social welfare as one can prove, for example, that a significant rise in the price of beef, *ceteris paribus,* will cause a fall in the maximum amount of beef that people are willing to buy. In debating social welfare, subjective judgments are required—judgments of fact and, possibly, also judgments of value.

I say *possibly* judgments of value because they could be avoided. To illustrate with an extreme example. I may assert that murder is "wrong". If you agree with me then we share the same value or ethic in this respect. If however, you do not agree with me, I could try to persuade you. I could quote the golden rule. I could describe the apprehension of honest men if murderers went unpunished. I could talk of the pity of extinguishing the life of an innocent man. I could depict the grief of his family and the loss suffered by the community. And thus by an appeal to your imagination, to your feelings and conscience —a product of instinct, education, social environment and emotional experience—I might finally

[6] In pre-industrial civilisations, according to Jacques Ellul in *The Technological Society*, the time given to the use of techniques was short compared with the leisure time devoted to sleep, conversation, games and meditation. For primitive man and historical man, work as such was *not* a virtue. It was better not to consume than to work hard. Thus man worked as little as possible and was content with restricted consumption. Today comfort means easy chairs, foam-rubber mattresses, bathrooms, air-conditioning, washing-machines, etc. The chief concern is to avoid physical effort, and therefore we become more dependent upon the machine.

According to S. Giedion (quoted by Ellul) men of the Middle Ages were also concerned with comfort. But for them comfort represented a moral and aesthetic order. Space was the primary element. Men sought open spaces and large rooms. They did not care if the chairs were hard or the rooms ill-heated. What mattered was proportion and the materials used.

[7] For the recent history of England, I should be inclined to pick out the time of Chaucer, the Elizabethan age, the mid-eighteenth century, possibly the Edwardian age.

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elicit your assent to the proposition that it is wrong to murder.

I could, however, try another tack. Though again I would rouse your imagination by describing the likely consequences of regarding murder as an acceptable form of conduct—the sorrow of the victim's family, the fears that might come to dominate so tolerant a society, the time and effort people would have to spend in attempting to protect themselves—I do not try to persuade you to agree that murder is wrong. I merely put the suggestion that such consequences are not compatible with the good life, at least not with a happy life. If you agree with me that a murder-permissive society is likely to result in a decline in people's experienced happiness, then you are subscribing to a judgment of fact.

It is unnecessary to remark that there can be close connections between judgments of facts and of values. But in the sort of debate we are immersed in, there are advantages in emphasising the distinction. At all events, the kinds of judgment that will be found in many of the arguments that follow are chiefly, perhaps wholly, judgments of fact. These judgments are invoked in detecting consequences, in gauging the likelihood of their occurrence, and in appraising their impact on people's well-being. Included also are judgments about the nature of people's value-judgments. Although both kinds of judgment are necessarily subjective—that is, they cannot be proved "scientifically"—it does not follow that they cannot be regarded as dependable guides to action.

However, not all judgments command equal respect or equal assent. Nor should they. The belief that the music of the Beatles will outlast that of Beethoven (which, I assure you, is a conviction held by some of the young) is not, I submit, an intelligent belief; and I would not waste my time arguing about it. Nor again is the view that "push-penny is as good as Pushkin", or that *The Adventures of Superman* provides as much authentic human experience as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, worth disputing. Certainly if society ever abandoned itself to such indiscriminate tolerance, literature would have no place in the curricula of our schools and universities.

In this connnection, I will remind you that we are restricting our attention to the affluent societies of the West[8] in which there is yet a fair consensus of opinion, and some common beliefs, about the constituents of the good life. I should also remind you that, when judging of the past or thinking of the future, we must not unquestioningly attribute *all* events and *all* developments to economic and technological growth. Some significant events, good or bad, may have quite tenuous links with economic and technological growth, though indeed they may be mitigated or aggravated by them. But while exercising some scruples in this regard, we must not go so far as to omit factors that could be decisive simply because a statistical relationship has not been satisfactorily established, or is unlikely to be.

To choose a topical example: Do we really need exhaustive psychological tests to determine whether the manifest increase in violence and sadistic cruelty depicted in the mass media over the last two decades influences people for the worse? Is it not a reflection on the obsession with measurement, which typifies the technological society, that we feel impelled to undertake prolonged experimentation, and to employ all the impressive paraphernalia of advanced statistics, in order to discover something which should be obvious to a half-wit? Or (to put the matter more sedately) to confirm a fact of life that is part of the common psychological experience of the human race since the dawn of civilisation.

Where has it been proposed that parents should be visibly cruel to one another—on the cathartic hypotheses that in consequence their children would become the gentlest of lovers? When, on the same theory, was a drunk and obscene father regarded as a good influence? Why do we so readily accept the view that the brutal atmosphere of a prison can exert a brutalising influence on the characters of the inmates? And yet we are asked to suspend the judgment of our instincts, our senses, and our experience, and to consider seriously the possibility that scenes of repeated cruelty, scenes of cool and casual violence, scenes of sadistic titillation, seen day after day by the young and impressionable, will have no influence, other than a benign one, on their character or on their ideas of what is normal and acceptable behaviour!

The very least that should be said as a guide to social action is that since there is and has been, for millennia, a strong presumption that "bad

[8] I exclude the poorer two-thirds of the world, not because I believe that the conclusions reached about the advantages of sustained economic growth would differ that much for their predicament. But the issues are rather different; and the questions we should ask are rather different.

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examples" are bad, social policy should be guided by it until evidence to the contrary is overwhelming and irresistible. Our existing policy, in this respect (as in many others in a commercial and economic-growth dominated society), is of course the reverse of this.

Not on the Agenda

OF THE ODD ASSORTMENT of arguments that come up in this debate, a number are quite definitely "non-starters." We can save time and heat by recognising some of them before going any further.

No alternative to economic growth.—That economic growth ought not to be condemned unless a clear and feasible alternative policy is presented is hardly an acceptable statement of procedure. If some current practice is believed to be harmful, there is a case for pressing the enquiry even though no alternative practices are available. Thus, granted the absence of clear alternatives, a distinction has to be made between a proposal to *abandon* an existing practice or policy, and a proposal to *criticise* an existing practice or policy.

If the touchstone of our enquiry is to be the welfare of ordinary people, and if, by reference to it, we undermine the remnants of the traditional presumption in favour of economic growth as an engine of social welfare, we do no more than criticise an existing belief. Those who, notwithstanding, elect to support economic growth then have the option either of attempting to repudiate our arguments or else of accepting them, though continuing to support economic growth only during the absence of feasible policy alternatives. What growthmen cannot reasonably maintain is that effective *criticism* of economic growth is invalid (and, presumably, ought to be ignored) *just because* there appears to be no feasible alternative.

Nevertheless, I believe such an enquiry has more immediate interest than that of current historical judgment inasmuch as I believe that alternative policies will evolve without difficulty once people have begun to think in all earnestness about swerving off the growth orbit and settling for a more stable society.

And if it does transpire that there are no feasible alternatives, that economic growth is in fact inevitable, we should remind ourselves of the obvious: inevitability does not preclude undesirability. If, like the process of ageing, economic growth is adjudged undesirable, then it would seem more reasonable to try to slow it down than to try to accelerate it.

The manifest desire for more economic growth.—There are some common though trivial objections to the legitimacy of even questioning the desirability of economic growth

> in the face of the clear eagerness of the vast majority of the people . . . everywhere . . . to acquire or to hold on to the benefits of life in an advanced industrial society.[9]

Such remarks act to confuse the question of rights with questions of facts, and also to mislead with respect to the facts that are relevant to the issues.

Thus, to conclude such observations with a rhetorical question—What right have I, Mishan, to tell others what they should want?—is just not pertinent. Of course, the business economist likes nothing better than to be heard championing the rights of the common man to spend his money just as he pleases. And for my part, I concede the common man's right to sleep on a mattress stuffed with breakfast cereal and to wear a necklace of garlic cloves if he so chooses. For I do not question people's rights to spend as they please or, for that matter, to vote as they please. What is in question here is whether their welfare will *in fact* increase as a result of their increasing expenditures.

And such a question cannot be answered simply by asking people. If it could, I should not waste my time arguing the case, for it would be better employed conducting public opinion polls. Sample surveys of public opinion could indeed throw light on whether people *want* further economic growth, and on whether they *believe* that further economic growth will promote their well-being. But such surveys could not answer

[9] Norman Podhoretz, in *Commentary* (November 1971).

I might add in passing that from the observation that today, or during any period in history, people spend their income on some things—that is, they do not destroy or burn their money—one cannot infer that they believe continued economic growth will enhance social welfare. I assure readers that I do not throw away any of my money; that I hope to earn more; and that if and when I do I shall spend it all. Yet I assert my belief that further economic growth will not advance social welfare. ("Maximising my utility subject to budget constraints" is consistent simply with making the best of a bad job.)

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the question whether economic growth does *in fact* promote their well-being.

Of course, it is surpassingly convenient for the economist simply to assume that economic growth does widen the range of choices open to citizens, and then simply to interpret their market choices, or their economic behaviour generally, as reflecting their mature judgment about what most conduces to their happiness. But he is not, I hope, such a fool as really to believe it. He should be, at least, willing to separate the question of the eventual consequences (usually unforeseen) of the individual and collective choices that are being made, from the question of the political expedience in allowing citizens to make such choices, and also, incidentally, from their motives and promptings in making them.[10]

IF, THEN, I TAKE THE VIEW that, on balance, the consequences for the West of the continued pursuit of economic growth are likely to result in a diminution of social welfare, my belief, I am aware, may well conflict with the beliefs of the majority of people. Yet a voice urging a minority view is neither absurd for that reason, nor is it incompatible with the operation of liberal democracy.

However, if social welfare has indeed begun to decline with increasing wealth then—though not strictly germane to an enquiry directed, in the main, to the emergent social consequences of continued economic growth—it is, admittedly, tempting to speculate on how this decline in social welfare comes about under existing social institutions, and in particular under liberal democracies having responsive legislatures, and within competitive private-enterprise economies that supposedly enable people to make their own choice and to learn from their mistakes.

Concerning individual economic behaviour, a part of the explanation is, briefly, that owing to the absence of property—or amenity—rights prices do not reflect social costs. Consequently, scarce environmental goods are squandered and destroyed. Another part of the explanation is that, owing to commercial advertising, economic institutions, and modern journalism, the resulting belief-system is such that the multitude in affluent societies seek goods less as want-satisfying ends and increasingly as a means of asserting *status*.

As for political behaviour, in a two-party system, at least, the choice it offers at any moment of time is limited. Democratic parties are wholly absorbed with ways of retaining power or returning to power. Of necessity they are conservative. They address themselves chiefly to safe bread-and-butter issues—to the level of employment, prices, balance of payments, industrial disputes, and (since the War), to overall growth performances. For they are thinking largely of the electoral effect of their actions over the next one, two, or three years during which their assessment of the existing prejudices among party members, and the public at large, figures as part of the unalterable data. Moreover, where both parties adopt the same policy on critical issues—say, both are concerned primarily with economic growth or efficiency narrowly conceived, and only very secondarily with environmental issues and long-run ecological problems—the electorate has virtually no choice for the time being. Even though a majority of the populace has begun to doubt the conventional wisdom, the launching of a third political party is a Herculean task requiring time, patience, risks, sacrifices, and vast financial and political resources. And to alter the attitudes and convictions of existing party stalwarts on any major issue also takes time, patience, and financial and political resources.

These remarks are relevant also to the Panglossian view put forward by Edward Banfield in *The Unheavenly City* (1944) to the effect that existing social problems cannot really be too severe —for if they were, people would surely go to the trouble of solving them. Those which go unremedied do so, therefore, simply because the costs of implementing the remedies are expected to exceed the social benefits.

This comfortable view of society was doubtless held to be true on the eve of the French Revolution. But though it is hardly more than a tautology, the *cost* aspect deserves closer scrutiny.

True, any alternative organisation open to society that is manifestly superior to the existing one would be adopted without hesitation if it were clearly perceived by most people and if the transition were costless and painless. But a feasible design for some social improvement may not in fact occur to anyone for quite a while; and, when it does, so, initiative, effort, and expenditure

[10] One can convincingly demonstrate that Hitler led the German people into disaster while overtly acknowledging that they had the right to vote him into power. It is not necessary to the demonstration to explain just *why* they elected him.

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will be required to persuade others of its desirability. Greater efforts and expenditures yet may be necessary to overcome highly organised commercial interests and other vocal opposition groups. It follows, therefore, that even if eminently worthwhile proposals are advanced, they can founder for lack of funds and sustained endeavours.

Technology as a potential do-gooder.—There is, next, the frequent statement that, like science, technology itself—the main force behind current economic growth—is neutral. One cannot, therefore, associate it with good or evil attributes. "It all depends on how man uses it."

This is not helpful. First, let us not talk of "man", a singular embodiment of heroic qualities. Let us talk of men as they emerge from history, organised into nation-states, ideologically aligned, and perpetually struggling for advantage. While recognising the dedication of some, and the sterling qualities of many, there is no lack of historical incident to illustrate also their imprudence, folly, corruptibility, and iniquity. Yet it is to this society of imperfect beings and institutions that science vouchsafes its discoveries, and translates their potential into technology. If, in such a society, science is a power for good, it is also a power for evil.

Thus the *potential* of science and technology for good (or evil) is not the issue.[11] Their *actual* effects are. Intelligent conjecture about the future presupposes some knowledge of the existing power and reach of modern science, and also some idea of the scientific developments over the foreseeable future—from which we can speculate about the likelier consequences on our lives and character, bearing in mind the limitations of men and the driving forces of modern institutions, economic and political. Only in this way can we rightly appraise the contributions that science and technology have made, and are likely to make, to the human condition.

A related response, that of invoking stern challenges and calling on man bravely to face the future, to be worthy of his destiny, and other resounding rhetoric tending to the same purpose, has to go off the board also. For such rhetoric must favour technology irrespective of the record. Should technology appear to have benign consequences, they are cited as unambiguous proof of the blessings it confers on mankind; whereas if, instead, the consequences are transparently untoward or unsightly, technocrats cry "challenge" and perceive an immediate need for more technology yet—in order to solve the problems already caused by more technology.

Growth as a potential do-gooder.—Nor is it, for similar reasons, legitimate to argue that economic growth *per se* is above reproach; that economic growth *can* be good.[12] A well-known economist—I admit it with reluctance—judiciously defended economic growth on the grounds that although it could be bad in some circumstances, it could also be good; and that although it could be too fast, it could also be too slow. Inevitably, he concluded that we should seek the "optimal" (or the just-right) rate of growth. This sort of reasoning is but a lapse into tautologies. I do not doubt that the same economist would wish to persuade us that if purged of all "externalities", Hell itself would be quite a comfortable place to live in.

One can imagine, that is, some distillation of economic growth, some essence purified of all harmful "external effects", which—when the term "external effect" is broadly enough defined—cannot but issue in ideal human progress. But such flights of inspiration offer no plausible picture of the future and no guide to action. Economists all know that a narrow range of adverse spillovers can beneficially be reduced given some political initiative and effort. These spillovers include air and water pollution, noise,

[11] Indeed, every scientist is obviously under temptation to stress the "good" uses of his research. Even in so frightening a field as the study of RNA and DNA (the acid substances which store and pass on as heredity the blueprint for production of proteins by the cell), research will be justified by the allegation that only thus can scientists learn what factors produce abnormalities and can learn how to correct them! There will be little mention of genetic controls.

But (as Jacques Ellul continually emphasises) science has a momentum of its own. If it *can* be done, then, sooner or later and under one pretext or another, it *will* be done.

[12] The all-too-frequent observation that economic growth is good for some people though not perhaps for others, is distinct from the statement that growth *can* be good for society as a whole in some circumstances. But it is too vulgar an irrelevance to be worth specific mention in the text. Indeed it is as near a tautology as makes no difference, since whether some material enrichment of a person is "good for him" is, in this proposition, dependent upon his own judgment. And if *material* status itself is at issue, it is obviously true that some people can be made better off whether the economy as a whole is stable, growing, or declining.

Our terms of reference, to repeat, concern the effects on the quality of life as a whole of continued economic growth in an already affluent society.

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congestion, ugliness and tourist blight. Yet this is nothing to the purpose. In judging of the quality of life over the last two decades we obviously can *not* abstract from the brute facts of expanding pollution. So also in debating the foreseeable future. It is *not* the potential ideal that economists believe they could realise, not the brave words of government officials or corporation executives, that are agenda, but the *political likelihood* of significant reductions being made over the next two decades by each of the familiar forms of pollution.[13]

Growth as a charity ball.—The "need" to maintain the momentum of economic growth in order to enable us to do good deeds is a special case of the preceding non-agendum, and for that reason is also inadmissible. The good deeds include helping the poor and ailing, promoting high culture, and expanding higher education.[14]

It is not simply that these arguments for the persistent pursuit of economic growth are quite distinct from those which turn on greater social welfare or happiness. For these arguments might win support on ethical grounds even if it were agreed that economic growth actually entails a decline in social welfare for the majority of people. The fact is that such worthy objectives can all be realised *without* sustained economic growth—unless by helping the poor we mean helping the have-nots in the economically backward two-thirds of the world. If we do mean this, we should bear in mind that the aid given to these poor countries by the West is slight. The U.S., the chief donor, gives sums that total much less than half of one per cent of her GNP. And though it is a comfort to believe that while you are munching your cake, the crumbs are not entirely going to waste, charity on this microscopic scale can hardly justify the pursuit of economic growth by the West. We might agree to consider the question afresh if we ever decide to donate a sizable proportion of our incomes to the poor living outside the West. (As for the help these poorer countries might derive from trade with Western countries that continue to grow at post-War rates, this is a controversial issue, especially in view of the Chinese experience; and I shall not enter it here except to remark that it would pose a moral dilemma for the West if it were ever agreed that our further economic growth was bad for us but good for them.)

If it is a question of helping the *indigenous* Poor in a variety of ways, or promoting the Arts, or expanding Adult Education, we should first ask about the size of the sums envisaged. Will about $20 billion be enough? If not, perhaps $50 billion, or $100 billion? But the latter figure is hardly more than three years' growth of GNP at current rates. Without anyone being made worse off, it would be technically feasible to distribute another $100 billion among these good causes. If we were really extravagant, we could justify perhaps 5 or 6 years' growth at current rates, but hardly more than that.

What is yet more to the point, however, we do not really have to raise the GNP of the U.S. to higher levels for such purposes. For with the abundance of the "demerit" goods that are produced today—with so much produced that is trivial, inane, if not inimical—we already have more than enough resources in hand to transfer

[13] The theme that economic feasibility is not enough, and has not in fact prevailed against vested commercial and political interests, has been developed recently in connection with water pollution in the U.S. by A. M. Freeman and R. H. Haveman; "Clean Rhetoric, Dirty Water" *The Public Interest* (Summer 1972).

According to *The Wall Street Journal* (5 November 1971): "A new report by the non-profit Council on Economic Priorities—a privately financed self-proclaimed business watchdog group—accuses some of the nation's larger corporations of jumping on the environmental bandwagon with advertising that ranges from the blatantly false to the subtly deceptive. The cost of such advertising, the report says, in some cases may far exceed the amount of money the companies are spending to directly reduce pollution. . . ."

According to *The New York Times* (5 November 1971): "Of 289 pages of advertising costing about $6 million, in 1970 issues of *Time, Newsweek,* and *Business Week* magazines, researchers found that more than half was from the five industries pinpointed in independent studies as having the most pollution cleanup work to do—electric utilities, steel, oil, paper and chemicals."

[14] We may want to include among the good deeds the strengthening of the country's defences and, in the world of today, it might be thought that we could use as much economic growth as we can get. But the proportion that the U.S. spends on defence today is less than 10% of GNP, and of the sum which that represents only a fraction is used in research. Ignoring inefficiency in the ways funds are spent by the Defence Department, and ignoring costly mistakes of the State Department, the cost of research directed to maintaining national security and keeping abreast of the arms race could perhaps be continued for a long time without the economy having to grow. The "spin-off" argument would, if accepted, lend support to continued economic growth. But does the evidence bear it out? Modern research is increasingly specialised: the bulk of industry's innovation appears to stem from its own research. Defence is no exception.

These remarks are, however, very tentative; and I am open to persuasion of the need, in today's uncertain political climate, for particular kinds of research and growth for defence purposes.

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resources to the production instead of these more meritorious goods.[15]

The appeal to the parameters of the system.—And this brings us to the question of political realism in a new connection. For we have already spoken of the need for gauging the likelihood of future developments—for example, the likelihood of reducing spillovers in the near future—in the light of given attitudes and institutions. The above observation, then, that some alleged good purposes of economic growth could conceivably be realised without economic growth, should, it might seem, also face the question of a political realism.

For instance, is it likely that people in the U.S.A. today, or in the near future, would agree to a transfer of some $30 billion to $50 billion, an annual sum which would surely suffice to remove all hard-core poverty from their midst? And although such sums amount to no more than 3 to 5% of GNP, the answer is probably no. Given the institutional constraints, it may be concluded, we can only do a little more for the poor by continuing to do a great deal more for ourselves. On such attractive terms, technocrats and businessmen are always glad to do good.

But although this conclusion follows, it does not constitute a vindication of economic growth. Quite the contrary. Recall an earlier *caveat* that in appraising the salient features of modern society, the debate requires that there be a presumption that they be related to economic growth. The feature in this instance—the fact that even while there is everywhere evidence of over-indulgence and almost criminal waste, the citizens of the affluent societies cannot collectively agree to curb their more extravagant expenditures so as to alleviate the wretched poverty of others of their countrymen—is surely related to the processes of economic growth. If this rather lamentable "institutional constraint" springs from an ethos that is favourable (if not essential) to economic growth, an ethos that is indeed promoted by economic growth—if, to be more explicit, the pursuit of economic growth over the years has been maintained (and will continue to be maintained) only by the priority given by individuals to self-seeking, and if that self-seeking is aggravated by the discontent generated by the system itself—then such "institutional constraints" themselves are among the more shameful products of economic growth.

In sum, by accepting current political attitudes as constraints, or "parameters", we are implicitly passing harsh judgment on the human consequences of the pursuit of economic growth.

The no-growth pains of a growth economy.—Finally, in so far as ecologists and environmentalists reject further and sustained economic growth as a desirable social goal for the West, they are frequently reminded by economists of the difficulties that arise when the economy does not grow. In each of the short-lived periods of stagnation of the American economy, for instance, there has been an appreciable rise in the number of unemployed, a decline in the share of labour income (except perhaps during the more prolonged depression of the 1930s), particular hardship among the poorest section of the populace, a frustration of people's expectations, and increased conflict among the working classes.

Yet these recessional features are not pertinent to the issue. For they are peculiar to a growth-bound economy, one in which a period of no-growth, or a decline in growth, arises from market failure and inadequate monetary and fiscal policies, and necessarily entails unemployment, stagnation, and, consequently, increased frustration.

Those concerned primarily with the quality of life have never proposed creating unemployment *in the growth economy* as a means of slowing the pace of economic growth. Rather they seek to persuade the public to *abandon* the pursuit of economic growth in favour of a stable (or steady-state) economy within which there are to be institutions for the explicit and prolonged consideration of the factors that enhance the quality of life. The actual means whereby a steady-state economy is to be brought into being (the rationing of raw materials, the controls on technology, and the level of affluence to be aimed at) are important subjects of discussion; but they are perhaps premature. Immediate concern is with the revolution in thought and feeling that is necessary if men's aspirations toward the good life are ever to be realised.

Thus, the *aim* of the ecologist and environmentalist is *not* a no-growth economy *per se*. It is the *acceptance*, by the public at large, of a

[15] According to Reece, "Businessmen Look Hard at Advertising", *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 1971), a poll of business executives themselves revealed that 85% thought that advertising *often* persuades people to buy things they do not need and (in the opinion of 51%) things they do not even want.

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no-growth economy. Once the ethics of a no-growth economy are accepted, and the competitive striving for more, ever more, is a thing of the past, it will be that much easier to remove the wretched poverty that still lingers in Western countries, to redirect expenditure away from current extravagance and waste, and to bring about a more equal distribution of income.

The Decisive Issues

HAVING, I HOPE, CLEARED AWAY some of the verbal undergrowth that tends to impede the progress of this debate, we are better able to perceive the issues which can be decisive. Since we are restricting the question to whether sustained per capita growth of GNP in the West has recently promoted and is likely to promote social welfare, these issues can be divided, arbitrarily perhaps, into two categories.

In the first are the conventional array of adverse spillovers, air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, noise, uglification of town and country, all of which have increased alarmingly since the War.[16] The question is: Have they more than offset the "normal" expectations of welfare gains? Also, are such spillovers likely to continue to grow so rapidly over the future as to more than offset potential welfare gains? Again, I would emphasise that so far as future trends are in question, the alleged potentialities for good—the hopes and aspirations of technocrats, and the political declarations of intent—are *not* to count. A judgment of the likely outcomes, bearing in mind the constellation of political and commercial forces, is what is called for.

In the second category are the remaining consequences of economic growth. How much weight is to be given to those pervasive repercussions that are less tangible and more complex than the familiar external diseconomies mentioned above? Doubtless, a lot of nervous excitement is generated by new discoveries—or "break-throughs", as we love to call them today. There is sure to be some initial exhilaration at possessing a new gadget or experiencing a new form of travel or sport. But these emotions have little affinity with the good life. We must turn from these frivolities to a consideration of the Faustian spirit that has taken possession of our society, and allows us neither rest nor respite. Unwittingly, through the process of continually and unquestioningly adapting our style and pace of life to technological and commercial possibilities, we may be losing, irrevocably, traditional sources of comfort and gratification. Those most pessimistic about the future are concerned primarily with these less measurable consequences of continued economic growth.[17]

Spillovers

IT IS DIFFICULT to draw a balance sheet summarising the net welfare effects of the increased output of goods and the concomitant spillovers over the last few years. Some vivid impressions of the environmentally disruptive effects that accompany economic growth, and the follies of the engineering approach to development, can be had by reading through William Kapp's pioneering work, *The Social Costs of Business Enterprise* (1962). Putting a figure on them, however, is a different matter. Even if we had details of all the physical data, from the hazards of chemical pesticides to rising levels of noise, from oil-fouled beaches the world over to forest-cropping and earth-stripping, we should, in a closely interdependent economic system, be faced with an almost impossible task of evaluation.

My inclination is to describe what has been happening on the advancing pollution-front in impressionist terms, while taking it for granted that the balance of the argument will be restored by the unremitting efforts of commercial advertising, establishment politicians, company chairmen, and the spate of articles in our newspapers and magazines that speak loudly of the goodies we have and of goodies yet to come. Thus, we can depend upon it that most people are kept continually aware of the manifold blessings of economic growth—fancier varieties of frozen-packaged goods and new slimming tablets and

[16] I am aware that the Clean Air Act of 1957 in Britain did much to reduce the sulphur and carbon dioxide content of the air, and the danger of fogs. The carbonmonoxide content has, of course, been steadily increasing. The Thames is today a *little* cleaner than it was a score of years ago and some (possibly mutant) fish have allegedly been seen. But these local improvements are slight compared with the spoliation of the countryside and the global pollution about which concern is growing year by year.

[17] An excellent critique of the ethical premises of economics over the last 200 years, and commentary on the moral purposelessness of the affluent consumer society, is to be found in Walter Weisskopf's recent book, *Alienation and Economics* (New York, 1971).

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vibrators; sleeker, faster automobiles and more comfortable artificial limbs; high-powered gardening implements and double sound-proof windows; more thrilling television programmes and more powerful psychiatric drugs; and so on.

In addition to describing the impact on our lives of these ubiquitous spillover effects,[18] the old-fashioned notion of the diminishing marginal utility of goods and the increasing marginal utility of bads can bear more emphasis. And not only the diminishing marginal utility of goods but the very real possibility of negative marginal utility. For one thing, choosing from an increasing variety of goods can be a tense and time-consuming process—even with impartial consumers' services that can seldom keep abreast of rapid change in products and models. For another—as Stefan Linder observes in his admirable and amusing *Harried Leisure Classes* (1969)—Americans are already becoming frantic *trying to find time to make use of all the gadgets and sports-gear they feel impelled to buy.* And they suffer endless frustrations simply in trying to "get away" in their automobiles to recreation centres along with millions of other Americans, all equally determined to get away.

Another thing needs emphasising. The incidence of a single spillover alone—be it foul air, endless traffic bedlam, noise, or fear of criminal violence[19]—can be enough to counter all the economic prosperity.

Let a family have five television sets, four refrigerators, three cars, two yachts, a private plane, a swimming pool, and half-a-million dollar's worth of securities. What joy is left to it if there is barely a moment of the day or night but its ears are being assaulted by air and ground traffic? What enjoyment is left to a family that fears to stroll out of an evening, that has to take elaborate precautions against burglary, that lives in continuous anxiety lest one or another, parent or child, be kidnapped, mutilated, or murdered? A huge bagful of consumer goods, an impressive list of technical achievements, can hardly compensate for any one of such ugly facts —a product of post-War affluence—that have come to blight the lives of millions of Americans, and to turn to ashes their hopes for a better future.

FINALLY, THERE IS IN THIS connection one super-spillover worthy of special mention. Familiar to economists, it tells more strongly against continued economic growth if only because it is one for which the economist can propose no remedy consistent with economic growth. I refer to what is known in the economist's jargon as the *relative income hypothesis*—or, more facetiously, as the *Jones Effect* (*i.e.*, the keeping-up-with-the-Joneses effect).

In an affluent society people's satisfactions, as Thorstein Veblen observed, depend not only on the innate or perceived utility of the goods they buy, but also on the status value of such goods. A more general way of putting the matter is to state that the satisfaction a person derives from his current expenditure depends not only on the goods he buys but also on the goods bought by others. Thus, to a person in a high consumption society it is not only his absolute income that counts but also his *relative* income, *i.e.* his position in the structure of incomes. In its extreme form—and as affluence rises (according to the theory) we draw closer to it—only relative income matters. A man would then prefer a 5% *reduction* in his income accompanied by a 10% reduction in the income of others to a 25% increase in his income along with a 25% increase in the income of others.

The more this attitude prevails—and the ethos of our society actively promotes it—the more futile is the objective of economic growth for society as a whole. For it is obvious that over time everybody cannot become relatively better off. The economist can, of course, continue to spin his optimal equations even in these conditions; but he has no means of measuring the loss in terms of utter futility. Since the extent of these wealth-dissipative effects are never measured, estimates over the last few years of increments of "real" income (or "measured economic welfare") have to be rejected as wholly misleading.

[18] See my *Costs of Economic Growth*, (London, 1967), parts I and II; also "The Spillover Enemy," ENCOUNTER, December 1969.

[19] The connections between increased affluence and crime have not been made explicit. Statistics have been produced to show that crime in the U.S. is positively related to city size. Though this may be particular to the U.S., there would seem to be a relation between affluence and crime across countries. Certainly crime has been rapidly rising in all Western countries since the War. This is partly, perhaps, a result of the drift to the towns, itself a direct consequence of economic growth (less agricultural labour being needed). It is also partly, one conjectures, because of the greater opportunities for quick enrichment (in which the fast get-away automobile plays a large part), along with the erosion of moral standards (attributable to the spread of secular standards and to the growth of porno-violence in mass media entertainment).

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As Gilbert and Sullivan knew: "things are never what they seem! . . ." And we can adopt this dictum as the *leit-motif* in reflecting on the unmeasurable social consequences of economic growth in an already wealthy society.

These unmeasurable consequences stem from two characteristics of modern economic growth. On the one hand, there are the forces necessary to sustain the momentum of economic growth, both the motive forces and the productive methods. On the other hand, there are the innovative forces, both the "knowledge industry" itself and the resulting flow of new products and services. Let us consider them in that order.

The Motive Forces

As George Bernard Shaw observed, "Discontent is the mainspring of progress." This discontent is writ large into the ethos of the affluent society. It is institutionalised by the agencies of Madison Avenue, and hallowed by our system of higher education. If continued discontent with what they have is required to keep people buying the increasing outputs of modern industry—and if continued discontent with what they are is necessary to keep them working the machine—is it possible to believe that people are nonetheless happier as they earn more and absorb more goods?

Moreover, this discontent with one's income and status is surely being intensified by the post-war eruption of information concerning the incomes and the consumption activities of people in other occupations and in other walks of life both at home and abroad. The secret of how to keep people running is to widen the gap between their material conditions and their material expectations. If this gap is a measure of society's unfulfilment, we might well wonder if it was ever wider than it is today—not only in affluent societies, but in every part of the world where people aspire to Western standards of living.

But people are kept running not only by nurturing unrealisable expectations but for another reason. "Keeping up with the Joneses" in respect of education has become the chief use of leisure—at least among the skilled professional classes—in a technological society obsessed with the production and publication of new knowledge. According to a recent observation of a distinguished economist:

> As the supply of educated labour increases, individuals find that they must improve their educational level simply to defend their current income positions. If they don't, others will and they will find their current jobs no longer open to them. . . . The larger the class of educated labour and the more rapidly it grows, the more such defensive expenditures become imperative.[20]

Futurologists continue to prate with animation about how education's becoming a continuous process from cradle-to-the-grave. Yet for ordinary educated workers—and their proportion of the labour force is growing—the unremitting efforts needed to keep abreast of the inexorable advances in their skill or specialism effectively reduce the sense of leisure and freedom. The thought that one is never secure in one's mastery or knowledge, that Sisyphean labours always lie ahead, burdens the spirit and constricts the margin for ease and enjoyment in the here-and-now.

The Productive Methods

Economists have so far signally failed to impress the public with the consumer bias of the market mechanism. The fact is that the choices made by citizens *qua* consumers become pivotal in the resulting pattern of resource allocation. In contrast, the worker tends to be regarded as a sort of mobile atom, a factor to be combined with other factors of production according to the changing pattern of factor prices, and to move from declining to expanding industries so as to meet the quickening changes of consumer demand. In consequence, plant and equipment in some sectors become useless all too soon; and skilled workers become redundant in the painful adjustments necessary to meet shifts in consumer demand that, in an affluent society, are often impulsive, fickle, and of doubtful welfare significance.

Although economists may justify these apparent wastes, generated by alternating and wayward currents of demand, by affecting to remain neutral with respect to consumers' taste (and though they may readily estimate the social worth of an additional transistor, or any other inane gadget, by a person's willingness to pay for it), there is no corresponding calculation of the really significant losses of welfare suffered by workers who are made redundant, even temporarily, by "irrational" switches of consumer expenditure. The costs of movement to another industry or area, especially where there is a

[20] Lester Thurow, *The Public Interest* (Summer, 1972).

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family to support, can be prohibitive. There may be little choice but to remain in the neighbourhood and suffer anxiety, plus a loss of earnings and status, for an indefinite period.

The worker's security in the modern economy is subject, however, not only to the vagaries of demand but also (and to a greater extent) to the continuing stream of technological innovation both in goods and in methods of production. New factory and office organisation, new plant and machinery, may well ease his physical labour. They may make the job more interesting, or less so. They may bring him closer to, or take him further from, his work-mates in terms of space or communication. But whatever the outcome, the worker ultimately has no real choice but to adapt to the changing shape of technology however it impinges on him.

This fact goes far to weaken the presumption in favour of economic growth and consumerism. Over the last two centuries workers were transformed from artisans and craftsmen to machine-hands and dial-watchers. Hasn't a decline taken place in the satisfaction once enjoyed by the worker in fashioning the finished product from the materials of the earth, and in the pride he once took in serving a community that valued excellence? And if so, can we be sure that the loss has been fully compensated for by the abundance of mass-produced items and by the transformation to a mechanised environment?

The Innovative Forces

IN A SOCIETY that pays ritual homage to our great secular cathedrals, "scientific" and "research" are holy words, and "scholarship" is almost synonymous with saintliness. But the social consequences of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, on which sustained economic growth ultimately depends, are far from being beyond dispute.

To anticipate a familiar response at this juncture, I might add that scepticism about the advantages of the spread of knowledge does not amount to a call for censorship, and that censorship itself does not necessarily entail repression, much less inquisition.

For one thing, the conditions necessary for the continuing advance of the "knowledge industry" may prove to be increasingly unfavourable to the good life. The degree of specialisation which marks the unrelenting endeavour to push forward the boundaries of every discipline can become so harrowing as to crush the capacity for any instinctual enjoyment of life.[21]

For another, all knowledge is imperfect knowledge. In consequence, any specific uses of new knowledge have effects that are difficult to foresee. A presumption in favour of technological advance may be in order for a relatively primitive economy. But in the modern economy that produces each year scores of new industrial processes, and markets hundreds of new compounds, the time and research needed to discover the side-effects of any one of them multiply rapidly; and the risks we run multiply accordingly.

It may be thought that the risk of any really serious accident arising from the genetical or ecological side-effects of any one synthetic substance is small. But as the numbers of such substances multiply from one decade to the next, the aggregate risk of some calamity occurring increases until it approaches a virtual certainty—the only mitigating circumstances being the prior occurrence of a lesser calamity that might be heeded as a warning.

Already we have technologies we ardently wish we had never stumbled upon and never could have: nuclear bombs, poison gases, biochemical and other nauseating methods of exterminating human life (or life in general). There are drugs such as Thalidomide we regret ever having marketed, and there are a number of synthetics and chemical pesticides we regard only as very mixed blessings.

Finally, the growth of knowledge enhances the secular to the detriment of the sacred. If it does no more than raise doubts in the minds of people it can be subversive of their sense of well-being. One wonders if the loss of the great myths by which men sought to order their lives, and more particularly the loss of faith in a benevolent deity and in reunion after death, is not chiefly responsible for that deep undercurrent of desolation that afflicts modern society.[22]

[21] Of more topical concern perhaps, this intensive specialisation is making communication between scientists increasingly difficult even though they are working in the same general field.

[22] The melancholia of which Boswell so frequently complained was not uncommon in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and has been attributed by some historians to the erosion of religious faith that came in the wake of the Enlightenment. It was to spread further down into the strata of society after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. The anguish of so sensitive a person as Charlotte Brontë on reading the atheistic arguments of Harriet Martineau and others is sympathetically portrayed in Mrs Gaskell's biography of her.

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Indeed, as historical knowledge grows, and hawk-eyed scholars find a vocation in debunking popular legend and national heroes, the pride of any people in their common past begins to crumble and, along with it, their sense of unity and morale also.[23]

The Shape of Things to Come

TURNING TO THE social consequences of the anticipated flow of new goods and devices, we could jog our memories by a quick glance down any list of innovations believed likely to be adopted before the end of the century such as the one hundred items exhibited by Kahn and Wiener.[24] Their list offers tantalising glimpses of a future scientific wonderland littered with "lasers and masers for sensing, measuring, communication, cutting, heating, welding, power transmission, illumination", etc. There will be miracle uses of holography and the exhilarating prospect of domestic robots, computerised homes, new mood-inducing drugs, genetic controls, artificial moons, manned satellites, brain aids, and improved cosmeticological techniques.

Of the innovations to come, perhaps those in the field of medicine appear at first glance to be the most promising—but not the least fearful. Mechanical aids or substitute limbs or artificial organs are surely to be welcomed—unless we look further ahead to an age in which a quasi-human being is made up largely of interchangeable parts. Electronic or chemical stimulators of specific areas of the brain, whether for pleasure or for improved mental capacity, though exciting to contemplate, also carry sinister possibilities. Similar remarks apply to genetic controls. Kahn and Wiener's Item 39, consisting of more reliable drugs for the control of fatigue, mood, personality, perceptions, fantasies, and other psychological states, is no more reassuring. The possibility that the greater part of the population of the West will live in a state of more or less permanent sedation, each person wrapped in a blanket of euphoria, all critical faculties blunted, bereft of true feeling and unable really to communicate with others, reminds us of the emotional cretins of Huxley's *Brave New World.*

But the publicity given to the more spectacular prospects presents a misleading picture of the progress of medicine as a whole. Cures for ailments such as arthritis, migraine, or the common cold are not yet in sight. There is, moreover, an increase in the incidence of some diseases and a gathering number of new ones that are directly or indirectly attributable to the advance of technology and to economic growth itself. In addition to the more powerful strains of germs that evolve in response to widespread application of more powerful drugs, the medical profession has begun to acknowledge maladies that are the consequence of the antibiotics, and other drugs, that are so liberally prescribed by physicians as a precautionary measure.[25]

Automobile fume and factory smoke are now known to aggravate bronchial and carcinogenic diseases. The pace of modern life in a continuously clamorous, congested, and media-soaked urban environment may be held responsible for the rising incidence of coronaries in the West and for other stress diseases. More generally, although one can only conjecture about the impact of such an environment on the mind of today's harassed citizen—exposed also to an endless deluge of newsprint and to the day-to-day, hour-to-hour coverage of global news, views, debates, educational features, explosive entertainment, and snap-fast comic dialogue—it hardly requires imagination to link such phenomena with the post-War growth of psychic disorders, a part of which expresses itself in weird movements, primitive cults, in wantonness and white-collar

[23] The published findings of Eysenck in Britain, and Jensen in the United States, which pointed to inferior genetical endowment of the Blacks in those countries is a good example of the spread of knowledge that has no useful policy-implications, and yet can be deeply damaging to the confidence and contentment of a people struggling desperately to regain its pride and confidence.

What is also of interest is that the scientists and liberals who attacked the motives, methods, or results of these authors never thought to attack the faith in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

[24] H. Kahn and S. Wiener, *The Year 2,000* (1967).

[25] As Garrett Hardin puts it: "Science is an occupation in which most experiments fail. . . . Confronted with any new untried nostrum, a scientist, if called upon to place a bet, will bet that it won't work. Such is the conservative judgement.

"The overwhelming probability is that any newly proposed remedy won't work. More: experience shows that there is an almost equally high probability that the new nostrum will cause actual harm.

"The most intelligent way of dealing with the unknown is in terms of probability. Therefore we should assume that each remedy proposed will do positive harm, until the most exhaustive tests and carefully examined logic indicate otherwise." *Exploring New Ethics for Survival: The Voyage of the Spaceship Beagle* (1972) p. 59.

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crimes, in fashionable obscenity, and in fanaticism and violence.

In so far as such disorders arise from characteristic features of economic growth in the prosperous West, can one reasonably anticipate their diminution from continued economic growth? Perhaps one can only hope for the discovery of yet more powerful mind-drugs and tranquillisers—and pray that their side-effects will not prove too dangerous or dehumanising.

A LARGE NUMBER of prospective innovations, other than medical, consist of improvements and wider application, in industry and commerce, of existing inventions such as computers and lasers that will have the effect of lowering costs of production. If innovation was only of this type, which enables the economy to produce more of already existing goods, economic growth would soon come to a standstill. For what keeps an already wealthy economy continuously growing is the annual cornucopia of new goods and new models of existing goods. Electric saw-knives, electric back-scratchers and massage apparatus, "nothing boxes", retractable headlamps, paper clothing—the list of such whimsical goods lengthens each year. What begins as a simple home refrigerator eventually emerges from some corporation's design department as a glamorous piece of kitchen furniture in a variety of colours or wood finishes, complete with freezer compartments, revolving shelves, self-defrosting devices, etc. With the advances in holography, television will take on three dimensions, with finger-tip control for size, vividness, and angle. Air-conditioning will come in a variety of sounds and odours, sea air, pine wood, mountain air—everything imaginable in creature comfort, freakishness and titillation. What can be said in favour of such likely innovations other than the prospect of some initial excitement—and the inevitable boredom as every family comes to own them?

Whether space travel will offer much satisfaction to our children remains to be seen. Once it is commercially feasible, a family Christmas trip to a dead and airless satellite may become popular—which would make it an opportune pastime in so far as the enormous expenditures required would contribute handsomely to maintaining the continued expansion of the economy. But is it possible to believe that the growth of mass interplanetary travel through a dark, cold, and inhospitable universe will bring much cheer or love into men's lives?

THE QUESTION THEN RECURS: ignoring the hazards associated with technological innovation, is there any clear presumption that life will be more satisfying to the ordinary mortal destined to be the innocent recipient of this motley assortment of wonders? If forewarned of the marvels of the horseless carriage, the flying machine, the magic screen in every home—to say nothing of universal education and free medical service—our great-grandparents would doubtless have imagined that life in the third quarter of the 20th century would be a rich and fascinating experience. But do people today believe that the lives they lead are rich and fascinating? Apart from the tedium of familiarity and abundance, there are many imperfectly foreseen and unhappier consequences of the widespread adoption of recent innovations, facts that must not be overlooked in appraising the impact on social well-being of future innovations.

Social Consequences of Recent Innovations

BY WAY OF illustration, let us ponder briefly on some of the less heroic repercussions of the much-heralded inventions mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

The automobile, in addition to producing congestion, noise, stench, visual distraction, has been chiefly responsible for the monotony, sameness, and ugliness of vast urban areas the world over. Having multiplied like the locust, having swarmed through every street and alley, all the mingling and gaiety once associated with the famous cities of the world has become a thing of the past.

The air-liner, in addition to plunging us into an era of shrieking skies from which it is virtually impossible to escape (short of living in isolation), has been responsible for a tourist explosion that has destroyed irrevocably all the once-famed beauty spots of the Mediterranean coast. Indeed, it is enough today that a coastline, a lake district, an inland resort, be known to be beautiful and accessible, for it to be doomed to destruction.[26]

[26] See "The Last Days of Andorra," in *The Economist*, 22 August 1959.

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I might add in passing that this is not the lament of an élitist.[27] These spillovers would have occurred, under the existing commercial institutions, irrespective of the distribution of incomes. They arise simply in response to the continuing increase in numbers—too many people and too many automobiles in relation to the scarcity of choice coastline of this now too-tiny planet. And the chief loss will fall on future generations who are on the way to inheriting a world almost wholly bereft of scenic beauty and grandeur.

Television, usually acclaimed as having limitless potential for education, also has limitless potential for holding people inert for hours. It promotes uniformity of speech—poor and hackneyed speech at that. It exposes innocent folk to repeated dosages of expert opinion and panel discussions which have the unhappy result of enabling them to see so many sides to a question as to leave them in a state of utter stupefaction: ready to believe anything and to forget everything. Television might fairly be designated the new opiate of the people, without which they might become so acutely aware of the intolerable features of the environment in which they are being submerged that they would become restless for reform.

The Advance of Technology

FINALLY, we should ask ourselves whether some of the less fortunate consequences of technological progress are, in the very nature of things, inescapable.

The Throw-Away Society. The apparently irresistible and perpetual advance of the economy toward the never-never land of universal abundance is surely self-defeating not only because of the "Jones Effect" discussed earlier, but for a simpler reason. The fact is that the experience of universal plenty itself breeds a throw-away attitude towards things. When a child has but one doll, she will treat it with loving care. When she has a dozen, they become items in a collection. Gifts lose the power to move when people have "everything": when wealth is such that no sacrifice is incurred in offering them.[28]

Technology and Individuality. We need not dwell on such insidious innovations as we are expected to stumble upon within the next two or three decades, such as "biological and chemical methods to identify, trace, incapacitate, or annoy, people for policy and military uses."[29] Even apparently benign uses of existing and emergent techniques have consequences that should give us pause. For technology, or rather technique, regarded as a form of compulsive systemisation of all activity, has already begun to edge itself into every niche of what used to be our private life and secret feelings. Methods for success in friendship, for optimising in sex, are now taught by tape and manual. Techniques for love, fervour, surrender, repartee, fantasy, impulse, laughter, are all imparted to the buyer of the booklet or tape, or to the enroller in the course. The precise movements, breathing, and rhythm, the timing of a variety of endearments, grunts, sighs, pinches and bites, are now elaborated in films and illustrated volumes for the would-be modern lover.

The social science "experts", too, have started to introduce such matter as part of the "life-adjustment" courses in schools and universities. For instance, the American University Community Center offers its students during the year 1972–3 quite a range of therapeutic services, including the following:

> *Encountertape Groups*—These are personal growth groups designed as structured, encounter experiences focusing on themes of trust building, giving and receiving feedback, direct communication, and sensory awareness. They will serve as an introduction . . . for well-functioning persons.
>
> *Interpersonal Skill Building Groups*—In these ten-session, skill-focused groups, students will be taught to monitor and master anxiety, using . . . improved social skills by learning to be appropriately assertive, and more direct empathic communication.

Let us forbear to comment on this pathetic display of jargon which regards the hapless human as a faulty machine, and wonder instead at the condition of the affluent society whose members have reached such a state of perplexity that things like trust and the interchange of affection—

[27] As mistakenly alleged by The Rt. Hon. Anthony Crosland, M.P., in his *Social Democratic Britain* (Fabian Tract 404, 1971).

[28] During World War II, I did guard duty one night for a friend who, to show his gratitude next morning, gave me a bar of chocolate. It was a scarce item during the War, and I was unforgettably touched by his kindness. I recall also an American journalist, visiting Britain in the spring of 1941, who gave his cabbie a pound of tea as a tip. The cabbie, overjoyed, invited him to his home and insisted that the journalist call him any time of the day or night he wanted a lift. One could multiply such instances—but not in an affluent society.

[29] Item 97 in Kahn and Wiener's list of 100 likely innovations.

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which should be as natural as breathing and sleeping—have to be mastered as a technique.[30]

Soon there may be no corner of his private fantasy in which a person might crouch and call his own. He may belong to a world where feelings are engineered, and no untutored emotion is left to well up within him.

Welfare Implications of Labour-Saving Innovations. The main thrust of industrial and consumer innovation over the recent past and over the foreseeable future appears to be directed toward labour-saving methods and devices which threaten to culminate in a push-button society wherein our commercially-inspired whims are to be immediately satisfied at the expense of our basic physical and psychic needs.[31] For new creature-comforts result also in loss of appetite and therefore also in loss of relish, which is not surprising since, presumably, man was made to use his muscles daily and to struggle physically. We may well ask: Can ease be enjoyed without prior hardship? Can fulfilment be realised without prior frustration? Can there even be love, passionate love, affectionate love, without sadness or pain? In seeking the devices of instant gratification purveyed by modern enterprise, and made fashionable by the collapse of standards of taste and propriety, do not men take the risk of cutting themselves off from the medley of experiences that makes them truly human.?

Labour-saving innovations pose yet a graver threat to human fulfilment. For inevitably they act to reduce the dependence of people on other people, and to transfer it instead to the machine. But can it be denied that human interdependence is the main viaduct along which affection and trust have habitually flowed?

Pre-cooked and packaged foodstuffs admittedly save the time of the busy housewife. But when a woman cooks for a man, or for her family, is the activity only a chore? Or is there not also an instinctual satisfaction in feeding her man or her children—a symbolic giving of herself to them—an act of tenderness and affirmation?

Children's television programmes can dispense with bed-time stories, but does not the child who rests against his mother's breast, and listens as the tale is gently unfolded, enjoy a richer experience? At the flick of a finger we can flood the living room with orchestral music that is perfectly executed, a delight to the ear—if we had not so much of it on easy terms that, inattentively, we hum snatches as we eat, talk, read, or wash dishes. But before the turn of the century, when the music a man could enjoy in his home might depend on his wife's skill at the piano or on his daughter's singing, did not the performance also release some quiet spring of joy and sympathy between them?

Personal contacts necessarily decline with the spread of more efficient labour-saving devices. They have already declined with the spread of supermarkets, cafeterias, vending-machines, with the spread of transistors, television sets, and, of course, the automobile. And they will continue to decline with the trend toward increased automation in factories, and computerisation in offices and homes, with the trend toward patient-monitoring machines and computer diagnoses in hospitals, with the trend toward closed-circuit television instruction, teaching machines, and automated libraries.

If we agree that, in the nature of things, the bonds of trust and friendship can grow only slowly, and that long association and familiarity with personages and places are a potent source of gratification to man, what can we reasonably hope for, in this regard, in a world of perpetual transition—where change and "newness" are sought after—where the trend toward increased mobility entails moving from one job to another, one city to another, one home to another, and taking jet tours to see ten countries in seven days and to meet a hundred or so other like-minded "pleasure-seekers"?

SUCH REFLECTIONS make it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the compulsive search for efficiency, directed in the main toward innovations that save time and effort, will continue to

[30] Yet this response is of the essence of technological process. For where wisdom would propose a retreat from the growth-path, or the surrender of some specific product or technique, the technocrat invariably proposes an "advance"—the search for more technology in order to mend or patch up the damage created by existing technology.

In order for people to have the freedom to drive fast automobiles, we sacrifice the lives of 145,000 people each year; and we maim for life several times that number. Few take seriously the proposal to abolish this mode of travel. The only issues under active discussion are better insurance, more safety gadgets, improved hospital facilities and, belatedly, supplementary and limited forms of public transport.

[31] We are slowly discovering unsuspected psychic needs, realisable easily enough in small communities but possibly incompatible with the extended metropolitan society brought about by sustained economic growth. In this connection see Chapters 5–7 of Gordon Rattray Taylor's new book, *Rethink: a Paraprimitive Solution* (London, 1972).

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produce for us yet more elegant instruments for our mutual estrangement. The inevitable consequence is a drying-up of the direct flow of sympathy and affectionate communication between people and, accordingly, a corresponding thinness of their emotional lives.

In Conclusion

ONE THOUGHT LEADS to another and, while there is still some consensus in the West, we might ask ourselves if the things commonly associated with the good life—a more settled way of living, a greater sense of ease and space, an environment having more natural beauty and architectural dignity, a return to the love of quality and excellence, a rehabilitation of norms of propriety, manners, and taste—can ever be realised by affluent industrial societies striving for greater size, speed, efficiency, and seeking to woo the consumer with yet more expensive and expendable gadgetry.

It is sobering to wonder seriously if more and more of what is innately trivial is being gained at a cost of more and more of what is innately valuable. If it is conceded that once subsistence levels have been passed, as they have in the West, the sources of men's more enduring satisfactions spring from mutual trust and affection, from sharing gladness and sorrow, from giving love and accepting it, from open-hearted companionship and laughter—if it is conceded also that in a civilised society the joy of living is augmented primarily by the sense of wonder inspired by the unfolding of nature, by the perception of beauty inspired by great art, and by the renewal of faith and hope inspired by the heroic and the good—if this much is conceded, is it possible to believe, at the same time, that the unyielding endeavour to harness the greater part of men's energy and ingenuity to the task of amassing an ever greater assortment of material possessions can add much to people's happiness?

ON THAT FINAL NOTE OF DOUBT I conclude this essay. If I have succeeded, in some measure, in kneading the stuff of countless debates into recognisable shape or in sorting out the issues from the non-issues, the reader may be willing to overlook the revelation, in the process, of my abiding scepticism in all that concerns the future.

Fall

All engines cut out and snow made the birds dumb
stiffened and stuck in postures of sex,
and half-built nests were vacated to fill
like sailors' kit bags with feathers
and fell to the ground.

And where they were left to drain, the plates
froze in the night, and we found in the eerie
overbright morning that rhubarb leaves
had crusted the window.

The Goyt, already heavily burdened,
growled with the extra load and the weir
glowed white, and the groin of the bridge was pummelled
so that we feared it would not hold,
though it did, the sluice.

And those at the bank and the corner store
wore that peculiar brand of politeness
that only climatic extremes,
or a war, produce.

Peter Reading

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Alastair Buchan

Viet Nam

Reasons and Rationales

THERE IS A FRAGILE and untidy armistice in Viet Nam, based on an ambiguous document and on international machinery for its enforcement which can only operate satisfactorily if all the belligerents of the past decade (the United States, South Viet Nam, North Viet Nam, and the NLF) are resolutely determined that it should. Already the Canadian government has made it clear that it is not going to get sucked into the kind of impotent guardianship of the outcome which it assumed after the Geneva settlement of 1954. Already the three Vietnamese parties to the cease-fire have indicated that they propose to pay minimal attention to the document to which they put their signature in January of this year.

So far as Viet Nam itself is concerned, we are back broadly where we were in 1954, with one major difference. Nineteen years ago, only three of the external powers (the Soviet Union, China, and France) were content to see the future of Viet Nam determined by the play of local forces—the first two from confidence in the superior strength and discipline of North Viet Nam, France because she was weary of the whole affair. Britain was ambivalent, largely because as the originator of the "domino theory" she was fearful of the effect of a Viet Cong or North Vietnamese mastery of the whole of Viet Nam upon Malaya and Singapore. The United States felt that (in the words of a contemporary National Security Council paper) "the cession of an advanced salient" to the Communists had been ratified by the Geneva agreement, and that it was a matter of the highest national importance that it should advance no further.

In 1973, the first three external powers I mentioned seem equally content to isolate the conflict. The Soviet Union is relieved of a large expenditure in sophisticated munitions, the Chinese now have many other outlets for their influence than Viet Nam. The difference is that the Anglo-Saxon powers are now also ready to see the Tonkinese, Annamese, and Cochin Chinese struggle among themselves for the upper hand—Britain because the rest of South East Asia is more stable and because the focus of her interests have changed, the United States because she has undergone a searing experience in trying to impose her own pattern of order upon Indochina which has been basically unsuccessful. As I once suggested might happen (in ENCOUNTER, January 1968), there now appears to be a tacit national conspiracy to ignore the consequences.

I TOO HAVE JUST COMPLETED a searing experience, that of reading 2,337 pages in four books that are primarily (though two of them not exclusively) concerned with the American experience in Viet Nam. Lest I be accused of prejudice arising from that well-known malady, reviewer's exhaustion, I think I should state my own views about the setting and the effect of the Viet Nam tragedy.

The international system has been undergoing a considerable change in the past few years and the period of transition is not yet finished. But Viet Nam played only a minor part in this process. In the first place, clearly one of the most (if not the most) important sources of change was the Sino-Soviet conflict. The dispute, whose origins go back to the 1950s, became apparent to

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the world in 1963. It flared up again in 1969 to the point where China clearly identified the Soviet Union as its principal adversary and began the process of *rapprochement* with the United States. One can argue that the American presence in Viet Nam, and Presidents Kennedy's and Johnson's identification of China as the prime instigator of trouble there, created a synthetic unity between the Soviet Union and China throughout the 1960s and delayed this development. But it is by no means clear that if the Americans had never got involved in Viet Nam, the development of a tri-polar relationship, or of Sino-American understanding, would have been accelerated, because during the period of maximum American preoccupation with Viet Nam, the Cultural Revolution, whose causes were only partly related to Viet Nam, made China a non-participant in international politics.

Secondly, the United States would in any case have lost its position of centrality and pre-eminence in the Western world even if no American soldier had ever set foot in Viet Nam. Walt Rostow calls it "the diffusion of power" (though his thesis does not support his title), namely the rise of Japan and the countries of the European Community to positions of great influence in international trade and finance. This undermined the whole Bretton Woods system on which, together with strategic weapons, the hegemonial position of the United States was based. Moreover, the Soviet attainment of parity in strategic weapons with the United States in the later 1960s was not a consequence of Viet Nam.

Consequently, the last few years would in any case have witnessed a considerable American debate about its position in the world and its interests. (One can argue in cold blood that Viet Nam was a positive advantage in getting rid of Lyndon Johnson in 1968 and thereby making it easier for a successor régime to reciprocate Chinese overtures when they came a year later.) What the involvement in Viet Nam did was simply to make this domestic debate more acrimonious, to associate it with external commitments, to show up the grave weaknesses in the whole American machinery of government, and to lower the credibility of any statement emerging from Washington, both in the eyes of other capitals and of a rising generation of Americans. This last result is a serious one in a period of rapid transition. For me to suggest that Viet Nam may occupy no more than a few paragraphs in the histories of the later 20th century is to minimise neither its tragic course nor the harm that it may have done to contemporary American society.

IT IS NO INDEX of a correlation between wordage and importance to say that the shortest of these books is also the slightest.[1] American public life is on the whole less nepotistic than that of other democracies, so it is a curiosity that a number of public figures have been brothers: Walter and Victor Reuther, John Foster and Allen Dulles, William and McGeorge Bundy, Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Walt Whitman and Eugene Victor Rostow. The Rostows were influential in the Johnson years, and Eugene, the lawyer (and Dean of the Yale Law School), was Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs in succession to George Ball.

He has used his return to academe to identify a number of enemies who question the correctness of American policy in the past generation, the revisionist historians like Carl Oglesby and W. A. Williams who pin the prime responsibility for the Cold War on "American imperialism", the more extreme critics of Viet Nam like Noam Chomsky, or later ones like Senator Fulbright and Hans Morgenthau. For the benefit of the Revisionists, he re-fights much of the history of the Cold War, often in quite telling fashion. With Chomsky he appears to be waging a drawn battle employing legal arguments where Chomsky uses moral indignation. For instance:

> Assistance to a rebellion within a state is just as much an act of war against that state as an open invasion. The rule is basic to the idea of international law. . . .

If that is really so then most great and middle powers have been guilty of acts of war in the past twenty years, the United States at the Bay of Pigs and earlier in Guatemala, the Chinese in South East Asia, the Russians in the Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East, Britain in Indonesia, the Tanzanians in Rhodesia. The list is very long and points to the sterility of the legal approach.

For Eugene Rostow the world has hardly changed since the Cold War. The only balance of power in the world is still the bi-polar Western-Communist one. The Soviet Union is steadily seeking to outflank the West in the Third World; the weapons of the conflict are largely ideological.

[1] *Peace in the Balance*. By EUGENE V. ROSTOW. Simon & Schuster, $8.95.

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> The cumulative spread of Soviet influence country by country, over a period of more than twenty years, has created a sense of unease in Europe and America that could easily become the panic that leads to war.

Personally this is not a world that I recognise. As David Watt has recently argued, too bland an assumption that a satisfactory definition of the *status quo* is being evolved between the two super-powers conceals the fact that East and West still have different definitions of the *status quo*.

> The deviations on both sides of a strict balance of advantage are not large and by themselves hardly constitute much cause for worry: but their combined effect over a long period of time could well be a tilt in the geopolitical balance of power.[2]

So there is a need for vigilance, but none for panic. The interesting thing about the elder Rostow is that though he flails at revisionists and critics of Viet Nam, the unmentioned object of his unease is really Henry Kissinger. He believes in an ideologically motivated foreign policy not in *realpolitik*, in an American high posture *vis-à-vis* allies and adversaries not in a plural world. "For a member of the Johnson Administration . . . [the] Nixon exposition of foreign policy makes slightly uneasy reading," says brother Walt. It seems there is fraternal agreement here.

Rostow *deuxième* is a more important book not just because it is longer but because Walt served in Washington throughout the whole of the Kennedy and Johnson years (first as deputy to McGeorge Bundy in the White House, then as chairman of the Policy Planning Council in the State Department, then as Bundy's successor).[3] He thus has a longer record to defend than his brother. He also has a greater diversity of interests, having started as an excellent economic historian, progressing to an interest in development economics (in the course of which he elaborated the theory of "Take-off" that failed to convince most of his fellow economists) until he became the jack-of-all-trades of the New Frontier and the Great Society. As a Washington operator he acquired a reputation for intrigue, for wild optimism about the efficacy of the American operation in Viet Nam, as well as for cooking the books on the meaningless statistics on "Kill Ratios", "Body Counts", "Hamlet Control" and all the other delusions that made LBJ about the only man in Washington who by 1967 could not see that the United States was condemned to, at best, permanent frustration in Viet Nam. After 1968 he settled down hard by his old master at the University of Texas.

For Walt, as for Gene, the whole vast panorama of the Third World is a battleground in which the United States and the two great Communist powers fight for the future mastery of the world. He calls his book "The Diffusion of Power", implying that the post-War dominance of the super-powers was an aberration which has been gradually becoming rectified throughout the past twenty years. But in fact he credits both the John F. Kennedy and the Lyndon Johnson Administrations with a great deal more influence over the course of events than by then they had, especially in the Middle East. He also seems to me to go in for a certain amount of just plain baloney, as in the following quotation:

> In January 1966 Johnson let Kosygin take the lead as an intermediary between Ayub and Shastri in Tashkent, and he orchestrated American diplomacy in such a way as to ease Kosygin's task. (I heard Johnson several times observe: "I couldn't be seen; but I was at Tashkent.")

For Walt as for Eugene, the United States was and should be the centre of the international system. Europe apparently was having a "holiday from responsibility" in the 1960s. Japan is hardly mentioned except in criticism of Nixon. And for an economist he appears curiously blind to the non-political forces shaping international politics.

He took his particular cue on South East Asia from John F. Kennedy's rationale for getting more deeply involved in Viet Nam than President Eisenhower ever had been.

> [JFK] began with domestic political life. He said if we walked away from South East Asia, the communist takeover would produce a debate in the United States more acute than that over the loss of China. Unlike Truman with China or Eisenhower in 1954, he would be violating a treaty commitment to the area. The upshot would be a rise and convergence of left and right-wing isolationism that would affect commitments in Europe as well as in Asia. Loss of confidence in the United States would be worldwide. Under these circumstances, Khrushchev and Mao could not refrain from acting to exploit the apparent shift in the balance of power.

Walt Rostow became obsessed with the fear that if the Viet Nam engagement became protracted either American will-power would sag or "the United States would intervene con-

[2] David Watt, "Four More Years—of What" in *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1972–3.

[3] *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History*. By W. W. Rostow. Macmillan, N.Y., $12.50.

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vulsively, as it had done late into other great military crises of the twentieth century." A curious rationalisation this! There was nothing convulsive about Woodrow Wilson's action in 1917; in 1940 the U.S. was attacked; and Americans were passive at the time of Manchuria and Abyssinia. So it was that in the name of global stability he became one of the most ardent proponents of escalation in Viet Nam.

WALT ROSTOW—it was felt at the time in every Western capital—simply lacked the judgment for the positions of responsibility that were given to him, and his book supports these doubts. Is it really true that "in 1964–5 Peking, recovering from the failure of the Great Leap Forward, was pressing forward in company with Sukarno, Ho and others to collapse the non-communist states in South East Asia . . ."? I know that President Johnson was saying this, but then Rostow was writing the speeches. According to the full version of the Pentagon Papers the American intelligence community could offer no confirmation of this assumption. Again, is it not wholly absurd to describe General Ky's promise in January 1966 (extracted under extreme American pressure) to hold a referendum as setting in motion "one of the most remarkable sequences in a modern post-colonial nation . . ."? And at times he simply falls back on the insider's dark hint: "The alternative to introducing American forces in 1965 as seen by Johnson was a fairly complex sequence of events which was likely to yield a larger war fairly soon. . . ."

Here was a man of learning, high in the counsels of a powerful government, able (one might have thought) to bring insights and considerations to the formulation of policy which men reared in the ruck of politics could not be expected to. And yet he becomes engrossed in bureaucratic manipulation, allows himself to be overworked, and in the end is able to give no consistent account of his stewardship. On one page, it is the development of American political society which is the key variable; on another, it is the gamble "on the gathering strength and ultimate viability of South Vietnamese and South East Asian nationalism."

Even if the main impression of these 750 pages is that of a man stumbling about among the trees, blindly optimistic that there is an exit, ignorant of the size and shape of the wood, still there is a certain honesty in them. He does not try to conceal his role in helping escalate the Viet Nam conflict. Indeed, a year before Johnson threw in the towel he was urging a limited invasion of North Viet Nam. (Judging from the recent majority support for Nixon's bombing of Hanoi just before the cease-fire, this might well have been quite popular in 1967 if it had not caused too many casualties.) Unlike many other memorialists he does not duck the blame or knock his colleagues.

DAVID HALBERSTAM who, though a journalistic outsider, sets out to do just that, starts from a point curiously similar to Rostow's.[4] America's relations with Europe or with any other major power are for the "cookie pushers." It is in the developing world that the he-men of international politics show their muscle. The "key" area for the United States is not Latin America, or the Middle East, but you-know-where.

I think that *The Best and the Brightest* must be one of the worst books I have read in a half century of hard reading since I first finished *Peter Rabbit*, despite the fact that the author has won Pulitzer Prizes and that his book is a best-seller in the United States. It purports to be a narrative account of the way in which the various American decisions on Viet Nam were taken, together with portraits of the men who took them. First, it is written in a grisly style, in what I suppose is the future pluperfect. Events rarely happen, they "would happen" ("the old man would remember", "years later, he would remember. . . . ", "dealing with the military once their foot was in the door, both Kennedy and Johnson would learn, was an awesome thing"). How did he manage even with a Roget of banalities to use just about every cliché in our tired old language? He goes on to compound that gross disservice that Henry Luce did to popular writing forty years ago, namely to pin an adjective on a man and to use it remorselessly each time he is mentioned as if it were his hat. Thus McGeorge Bundy is either "a man of Atlantic" or "cool." I suppose this could be called adjectival overload, and here is a fairly typical sample.

> The appointment of this patrician [Henry Cabot Lodge], symbol of the Establishment, defeated candidate for the U.S. Senate by Kennedy himself in 1952, defeated candidate for Vice-Presidency by the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, made the liberals in the Administration uneasy (though Rusk and the military were pleased).

[4] *The Best and the Brightest*. By DAVID HALBERSTAM. Random House, $10.00.

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I agree with Mary McCarthy's description (in *The N.Y. Review of Books*) of this as "a soft, spineless construction: nuggets of research stuck together with a repellent sweetish glue serving as a connective." But I am not too sure even about the nuggets of research. By comparison with the full twelve-volume edition of the Pentagon Papers, Halberstam gives one a very partial and fuzzy account of the way in which the crucial decisions of 1965 were taken. It is not even obvious to me that he had read these documents. If you want to know the family history of General Westmoreland or are interested in the fact that Mrs David Bruce burst into tears when Kennedy was nominated, plough through these pages. If you want a coherent account of how and why the Americans became involved in Viet Nam, save your money, for Halberstam is only the Louella Parsons of this epic tragedy. He has become so engrossed in collecting personal trivia that he has no serious judgment to offer on the plot.

"Why", Miss McCarthy asked, "is he writing this book?" The answer must surely be that he wanted to write a best-seller for a public in a mood of populism and looked up past formulas for success: it should be about the Great and must show them to have smelly feet of clay. For if he had a more serious objective, he has had the worst of both worlds. He has put a lot of effort—that is to say, interviewing—into the compilation of the book, yet since he makes so many palpable errors—and will not reveal his sources, in the grand Fourth Estate manner, though they are easy to deduce—the book is worthless as source material for either the contemporary or the later historian. And when he states that "Viet Nam had been chosen as a testing ground" for Walt Rostow's ideas on counter-insurgency; when he talks about Maxwell D. Taylor as the "linear descendent" of General Ridgway; when we encounter such phrases as "Morse received an anonymous phone call from someone at the Pentagon who was reasonably high up"; when he makes elementary mistakes of fact about non-Vietnamese aspects of American policy, his credibility, even as a good Pepys-like political gossip, evaporates.

AND THIS LACK of credibility to anyone who knows anything of the international politics of the past twenty years is a pity because the book contains a number of interesting assertions. He has some sharp things, for instance, to say about Robert Kennedy. There are some good descriptions of relations between the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and Washington. There is an excellent and, moreover, sympathetic portrait of Dean Rusk. But since so much of the rest is either inaccurate or innuendo, how is the reader to sift the gold from so much dross?

Halberstam also attempts to enshroud the dialect of Viet Nam with the mantle of American class conflict—arrogant Ivy Leaguers throwing their weight around the world—which would be vicious if the actual social backgrounds of Rusk, and McNamara, and the Rostows and others did not invalidate the whole argument. He also casts a pall of innuendo over the American military whom he rarely identifies and clearly did not know very well. I had a great deal to do with both the civilians and the soldiers of that period, and I confess that I resented the arrogance of the former and the shortsightedness of the latter. But Halberstam makes me want to rush to their defence. As Mary McCarthy has said of the soldiers:

> These were the crimes they committed in the exercise of their professional capacities (and as soldiers they had the right to refuse participation), but I do not see how they can be charged with sucking us deeper and deeper into the war, when the decisions to go ahead were made by US presidents and with the consent of Congressional majorities.

BY CONTRAST Miss Frances Fitzgerald's contribution to the growing shelves of Vietnamiana is a distinguished, even if it is not a very profound one.[5] Having visited Viet Nam as a free-lance reporter after the period of full American engagement, she became horrified by the degenerative effects that it was having on both Americans and Vietnamese. She set off to learn something about Viet Nam and South East Asia and quickly came to the conclusion that her countrymen understood nothing about the social structure or the cultural values of the one Viet Nam they were trying to save or the other they were trying to oppose. The consequence is really two books, put side by side: one is about the nature of Vietnamese society and its villages, and the other about the American involvement there.

I am not an Asian expert and I was able to profit from her account of the development of

[5] *Fire in the Lake*. By FRANCES FITZGERALD. Boston, Atlantic-Little, Brown, $12·50; London, Macmillan, £5.50.

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Annam, Tonkin, and Cochin China, even though she hops about a bit and at one point carries us in one fell swoop from 207 B.C. to 1966. One can easily see that it is very far from being objective, and her assertion that Ho and his successors had to be the inevitable victors, the desired cleansing spirit, because they embody the Confucian virtues, leaves me unconvinced. She is also capable of silly or superficial judgments.

Nevertheless, her description of the rise of the National Liberation Front (the way in which it differed from all other guerrilla movements in other countries, and should not have been put in a Rostovian box with Latin American or other Asian movements) is excellent. So also is her description of the social misconceptions of American reaction to it.

Her analysis of the American intervention, though much more coherent than Halberstam's, suffers from the fact that she has clearly not used the full twelve volumes of the Pentagon Papers, but only the highly slanted selection of them deployed as polemic by the *New York Times*. But her description of the unhappy American entanglement in the politics of Saigon is sound, as is her comment on the way in which the escalation of war became a sort of automatic process.

> . . . the United States had made a heavy investment in the Vietnamese army and none in the civilian parties. The commitment of two hundred and fifty thousand American troops in 1966 was a commitment not so much to a government or to a political process as to the thirty thousand American soldiers and the millions of dollars the United States had *already* invested in Vietnam.

Like Robert Shaplen (whose *The Lost Revolution* is, to my mind, the most distinguished book on this whole sorry episode) she tries to see the various moves through Vietnamese as well as American eyes.

> The "Vietnamization" program was, like so many American policies in Vietnam, a solution to an American rather than to a Vietnamese problem. While it permitted Nixon to claim that the United States was "saving" the South Vietnamese, it was in effect creating a social upheaval and exposing more Vietnamese to those very dangers he claimed to be saving them from.

She leaves the reader with a moving picture of the derelict drug-ridden slums of Saigon, taking their revenge on the thousands of returning American soldiers, hooked on heroin that had been traded across the breadth of South East Asia for their delectation.

Her thesis and final conclusion—that the Tonkinese, North Vietnamese, or the NLF must prevail in the regeneration of Indochina—seems to me to be more doubtful. She quotes Henry Kissinger in 1968: "It is beyond imagination that parties which have been murdering and destroying each other for twenty-one years could work together as a team, giving joint instructions to the country." But this is to overlook politics, to miss the extent to which Kissinger himself has created a certain relationship of confidence with Hanoi, and the effect on the local protagonists of the diminished interests of the external powers. I do not know what the eventual pattern of control and authority in Indochina will be, but it is early days for such sweeping prophecies.

Finally, I suggest that anyone who wishes to understand the process of American involvement in Viet Nam from 1945 onwards should read none of these books but the four-volume edition of the Pentagon Papers (known as the Gravel edition, because it was made available by being read into the *Congressional Record* by Senator Gravel of Alaska).[6] The Papers are by no means a complete documentation of the story for they really only include those papers that passed through one office of the Pentagon (that of International Security Affairs) and include none of the records of negotiation with allies (like the Australians or the British) or with adversaries. But the connecting narrative is reasonably objective, and it provides the best insight that I have encountered into the extraordinary cumbersomeness of the Washington decision-making process, the way in which expert advice is ignored even when expressly sought, the bureaucratic in-fighting, the inability of the machine to relate one objective to another.

I wish that I could be sure that the Nixon Administration, which has concentrated even more power at the centre, has learnt from the mistakes of its predecessors.

[6] Beacon Press (Boston) $45.00, £22.50; paper $20.00, £10.

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James Fenton

A Vacant Possession

In a short time we shall have cleared the gazebo.
Look how you can scrape the weeds from the paving-stones
With a single motion of the foot. Paths lead down
Past formal lawns, orchards, notional guinea-fowl,
To where the house is entirely obscured from view.

There are gravel drives too, beneath the plane-tree walks
On whose aquarium light the changing weather
Casts no shadow. Urns pour their flowers out beside
A weathered Atlas with the whole world to support.
Look, it is now night and there are lights in the trees.

The difficult guest is questioning his rival.
He is pacing up and down while she leans against
A mossy water-butt in which, could we see them,
Innumerable forms of life are uncurving.
She is bravely not being hurt by his manner

Of which they have warned her. He taps his cigarette
And brusquely changes the subject. He remembers
Something said earlier which she did not really mean.
Nonsense—she did mean it. Now he is satisfied.
She has bitten the quick of her thumbnail, which bleeds.

What shall we do the next day? The valley wanders.
You set out from the village and the road turns round
So that in an hour, behind a clump of oak trees,
With a long whitewashed wall and a low red-tiled roof,
Peacefully, unevenly, they appear again:

The square, the café seats, the doorways are empty
And the long grey balconies stretch out on all sides.
Time for an interlude, Evening in the Country,
With distant cowbells providing the angelus.
But we are interrupted by the latest post.

"Of course you will never understand. How could you?
You had everything, everything always went well
For you. If there was a court where I could sue you
I would take you for every memory you have.
No doubt you are insured against your murdered friends."

Or: "We see very little of Hester these days.
Why don't you come home? Your room is as you left it.
I went in yesterday, looking for notepaper,
And do you know? the noose is still over the bed!
Archie says he will bring it out to you this summer."

On warm spring afternoons, seated in the orchard,
The smocked serious students develop grave doubts
About Pascal's wager. M. le Curé stays
Chatting till midnight over the porcelain stove.
The last of his nine proofs lies dying in the grate.

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I have set up my desk in an old dressing-room
So that the shadow of the fig tree will be cast
On this page. At night, above the ridge opposite,
The beam of approaching cars appears in the sky.
And now a slamming door and voices in the hall,

Scraping suitcases and laughter. Shall I go down?
I hear my name called, peer over the banister
And remember something I left in my bedroom.
What can it have been? The window is wide open.
The curtains move. The light sways. The cold sets in.

Alan Brownjohn

Going up

After a year or two among the drop-outs,
One motivated drop-out
Dropped out, and took his paperback Tolkiens and his
Guitar to another part of town.

It was high summer, the workers were striking, and he was young;
And he bought himself a girl by computer, because
He had dropped out after getting a 2/1 in Maths
(And that after smoking a lot the night before)

And to borrow the money he went to a father
Who clutched at straws, and he set up in business
With a shop full of bygones and modest antiques
In a district where a famous estate agent used

Meat-porters, working spare-time to get Vacant Possession.
But to be fair, he did not cut his hair
(Which Jani trimmed) and he did not chuck his jeans,
And he even smoked a little now and then.
Well,

Soon the fully-converted, waste-disposing Georgian
Terraces filled with young sales executives,
Barristers, painters, young dons with a line on linguistics,
And their shop was full; and this pair sold Vic-

torian jam jars, Valentines, oil-stoves, tea-urns,
Shelves of pith helmets, sugar-tins, chamber-pots,
Phonograph cylinders, pincushions, ballads
With flaked yellow covers; and old solitaire boards

On which dainty marbles, quick and bright,
Ran round the bevelled edges, round and round
Going "Clink! Clink!" They bought a villa in Minorca,
And they named their children Siddhartha, Demian and Tim.

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Column

I AM SURE that other people besides myself have recently felt that they detected a significant change in public attitudes towards the idea of "permissiveness", which not so long ago seems to have established itself as the dominant ideology of the Anglo-Saxon world. It was an idea which was difficult to define, simply because its influence was so pervasive, particularly in the mass media. Indeed it was perhaps less an idea than a general attitude of mind and feeling, which coloured people's reactions to the most varied and disparate situations: to politics and to sex, to education and to art, to behaviour and to dress and to speech, to ethics and to morals, and even to such trivial matters as the length one grew one's hair. Permissiveness was both a style and a fashion, like the gothic or the baroque, and the very absurdity of some of its manifestations was a proof of how deeply it had affected people's lives.

But today an air that chills, blowing from several quarters at once, strikes at the exotic flowers which bloomed out of the decay of conventional morality; for permissiveness was above all a revolt against convention, in whatever form it showed itself, and whatever its function or its value. "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds"; if one is to believe the Savonarolas of our day, from President Nixon to Lord Longford, the garden of the permissive society has proved to be no Eden of prelapsarian innocence and joy, in which men and women walked naked and unashamed in a paradise regained, but a foul and evil-smelling swamp in which they writhe like animals in the primeval slime.

The ordinary man, of course, finds little in either of such contrasting views of the permissive society which corresponds at all closely to his own experience. He still finds that on the whole he is forbidden very much more than he is permitted; and that, so far as he is concerned, what are held to be the characteristic features of the permissive society, drug addiction, psychedelic trips, pornography, mugging, wife-swopping or what not, are still very much the exception rather than the rule. He finds it difficult to believe that he lives in so sensational a world; and on the whole he is inclined to think it an invention of the Sunday supplements and television, a game which *they* play but not he. And if he seeks distraction from the monotony of his life he is likely to find it in a modest combination of alcohol and discreet adultery; there are no Last Tangos in Birkenhead or Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Faced with a choice between the Utopian absurdities depicted in a book like *The Greening of America*, or the warnings of moral collapse pronounced by prophets of doom, ordinary men and women are inclined to dismiss them both as no concern of theirs, and turn with relief to the anodyne delights of television, the football match, and the bingo hall.

And yet—*eppur si muove*; things may be changing. In the United States, for instance, it would be difficult not to see in the overwhelming defeat suffered by George McGovern in the Presidential election some kind of condemnation of the libertarian and permissive ideology he was thought to represent, and, even more explicitly, of his enthusiastic young supporters who seized control of the Democratic convention. Or again, in this country, any politician, or anyone else who depends on public support for his position, would be unwise to ignore the growing suspicion which many people share that permissiveness, which once seemed to promise an increasingly humane and civilised society, has in fact seriously weakened the authority of the law and created a threat to the peace and security which men and women believe they have the right to enjoy. For on the whole they believe that there is a connection between the majesty and authority of the law and respect for certain decencies of conduct which we may dignify with the name of morality or dismiss as mere convention but are, in either case, thought to provide the foundation on which society rests. People think that they see, however dimly and vaguely, a connection between permissiveness and bombs in Whitehall, assassinations, muggings in the street; and who is to say that they are wrong?

IT IS ON SUCH FEELINGS, rather than on rational argument, that movements of public opinion depend. So perhaps it is not surprising that at this moment a problem which one had thought to be finally settled, both in this country and the United States, has once again reared its ugly head; that is to say, the problem of capital punishment. It is surely not a coincidence that in the same week President Nixon should have expressed his intention of introducing legislation to restore the death penalty for certain Federal offiences, while in this country a private Member should have tabled a motion in Parliament calling for the restoration of capital punishment for "all murders committed in pursuit of another crime".

President Nixon, moreover, has made it explicit that, in wishing to restore the death

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penalty, he is trying to reverse a state of affairs which he regards as a characteristic feature of the permissive society; and he is confident that in doing so he has the support of the overwhelming majority of his countrymen. It is almost as if he were condemning to death, not any particular crime, but permissiveness itself. He contrasts the "moral fibre" of the American prisoners-of-war returning from Viet Nam with the "permissive philosophy" which regards crime as a consequence of social injustice rather than a matter of individual responsibility and guilt; rather as if the Vietnamese camps had been an isolation ward in which the prisoners had been protected against infection by a virus to which their fellow-Americans at home had been exposed and had alas, succumbed. "Americans in the past decade", he said, "were often told that the criminal was not responsible for his crimes against society but that society itself was responsible. I totally disagree with this permissive philosophy. . . ." He drew the conclusion that what was required was not programmes of social reform designed to remove the underlying causes of crime but harsher laws and harsher deterrents, including those which he proposes to apply to a curious assortment of offences ranging from treason and assassination to hijacking and the murder of prison guards.

THERE WOULD PROBABLY be no point in asking Mr Nixon why the death penalty should be particularly relevant to these crimes, and not to others, or be particularly effective against them. He takes his stand on his personal belief that, since the death penalty is the harshest of deterrents, it must quite obviously be the most effective, whatever crimes it is applied to. For what Mr Nixon is relying on, in this matter, is not argument or evidence, but feeling, and feeling of the most primitive kind. He also believes that this feeling is shared by the great majority of his countrymen; in fact, that his countrymen made him President of the United States precisely because he and they share the same feelings on this and a number of related matters, in particular the direct connection between permissiveness and crime. He may of course be perfectly right in thinking this, though one would prefer to think that he was not. But if he is right, one can only feel that, faced with the appallingly complicated problems which crime presents today, the United States has given way to despair and substituted primitive instinct for the normal processes of reason.

I REMAIN ONE of those people who believe that the abolition of the death penalty is a mark not of a permissive but of a civilised society, and I think that most people in this country feel the same way. For that reason, Mr Carol Mather's motion is not likely to receive the same kind of overwhelming support that President Nixon anticipates. Yet at the same time one has to recognise that, in itself, the abolition of capital punishment does not solve any of the problems for which the death penalty was believed to provide the answer. Indeed, in some ways it aggravates and intensifies them.

One of those problems might be rather crudely formulated as: what do we do with the murderers in our midst? I have been reading *Psychological Survival,*[1] an account by two young sociologists of the conditions which obtained, up to a year ago, in E-wing of Durham Prison, a maximum security unit designed for the reception of particularly dangerous and violent criminals. At various times its inmates included Ian Brady, the Moors murderer, Charles and Eddie Richardson, Ronald Kray and other members of his gang, and most of the Great Train Robbers. They constituted, as it were, an aristocracy of crime and were considered so dangerous to society, and so high a security risk, that extreme measures were necessary to ensure that they should never regain their liberty.

Many of these men would, before 1965, have been sentenced to death and would no longer have been a problem either to society, or to the prison or to themselves. Some were serving life sentences, and some sentences of up to twenty or thirty years; that is to say, sentences which ensured that they would either die in prison or be confined there for the greater part of their adult lives.

In 1965, the security precautions in E-wing were strengthened in preparation for the arrival of the train robbers, Goody, James, and Field. At that time, public opinion had been alarmed by the escape of another train robber, Ronald Biggs, from Wandsworth; and certainly a mood approaching something very near hysteria seems to have prevailed, if one may judge from a statement to the Press by the Chief Constable.

> I am satisfied that Goody's friends were prepared to launch something in the nature of a full-scale military attack, even to the extent of using tanks, bombs and what the Army describes as limited atomic weapons. Once armoured vehicles had breached the main gates there would be nothing to stop them. A couple of tanks could easily have come through the streets of Durham unchallenged. Nothing is too extravagant. . . .

This kind of reaction to the arrival of the train robbers was reflected in the security precautions taken in E-wing.

[1] *Psychological Survival. The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment.* By STANLEY COHEN and LAURIE TAYLOR. Penguin, 45p

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> The environment had been electrified for their arrival. The handles on the doors became "live" even to finger-tip touch once the electronic robot controls were switched on at night by prison officers, now nicknamed "Daleks" because of their new-found automatism. The wing had closed-circuit television to aid the monitoring of the prisoners and a specially trained officer sat in a bullet-proof steel and glass cubicle watching over the controls of this and other electronic devices. Subdued light burned all night in the train robbers' cells and at least one of them was forced to sleep with a handkerchief over his eyes. Over the coming years there were numerous permutations in the security arrangements, involving dogs, extra electronic devices and the photographing of relatives to prevent impersonation. . . .

It must be remembered that this was a régime under which prisoners were expected to live for the rest of their lives. The effect on one of them, John McVicar, serving twenty-three years for armed robbery, was to inspire a fixed determination to escape, and in October 1968 he succeeded in doing so and remained at liberty for two years. But this was a feat requiring a rare combination of luck and extraordinary resourcefulness and endurance.

THE QUESTION to which *Psychological Survival* addresses itself is how men condemned to live under such conditions for prolonged periods can retain any of the faculties and capacities which make them into human beings, even though criminals. It is significant that, in trying to find parallels to such a situation, the authors have had to resort to the experience of men reduced to the very extremity of physical and mental anguish: of Arctic explorers for whom life has been reduced to the blank uniformity of snow and ice; of single-handed sailors lost in the cruel immensity of the sea; of concentration camp victims stripped of all resemblance to human beings; of men who, for experimental purposes, have submitted to being confined in total darkness in such constricted spaces that all contact with the outside world is severed. In the last case, the subjects of the experiment very quickly succumbed to a kind of cosmic panic which threatened them with total mental breakdown. As an epigraph to their book the authors quote Captain Scott's despairing cry on his last journey in the Arctic "Great God! This is an awful place!" One prisoner described his experience in E-wing as like living in a submarine perpetually submerged in the darkness of a void to which no sight or sound ever penetrates from the upper world.

The common element in such experiences is not so much physical hardship, danger, exposure but total deprivation of everything which normally makes life tolerable or endurable, on however reduced a scale. The deprivation is not only of wives, girl-friends, families, children, friends, sex, meaningful work, but of other, less definable things which are perhaps even more important to the fundamental rhythm of human life; of, for instance, the perception of time as variety as well as continuity, of privacy as well as communication with others, of the alternation of night and day, of the continuous and essential stimuli we receive through our five senses from a world which contains literally infinite modulations of colour, sound, taste, touch and smell. Within the bare walls of E-wing, all these essential elements of a tolerable life were reduced to a minimum.

IT MAY PERHAPS be thought that *Psychological Survival* exaggerates the deprivations of life in E-wing. Yet in effect it is only an expansion of the conclusions reached by Lord Mountbatten (who after all has had some experience of extreme situations) in his enquiry into maximum security prisons—the conclusion that conditions in E-wing in Durham were "such as no country in the world with a record for civilised behaviour ought to tolerate any longer than is absolutely necessary as a stop-gap measure." In fact they continued for another six years after Lord Mountbatten's report was published, until last year, when, partly as a result of his report, and partly of the subsequent Radzinowicz Report on the treatment of long-term prisoners in conditions of maximum security, E-wing was finally closed down. Its inmates have now been dispersed among different prisons, but it may legitimately be doubted whether in fact their treatment is in any way essentially different from that which they received in Durham.

No doubt there are many who will say that they deserve it, and their position is at least a logical one. But those who, like myself, have supported and defended the abolition of the death penalty, must surely find it a poor, and even a cynical, alternative to condemn men to a lifetime of imprisonment under conditions which make life itself unendurable.

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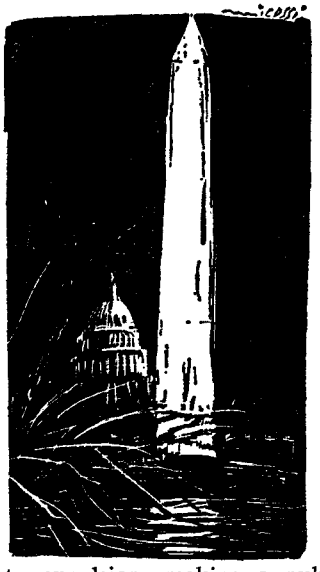
AMERICAN CHRONICLE

What is a University Press Worth?

By Morris Philipson



TO THOSE aspects of the University which have recently come under attacks which demand they justify their ends as well as their means must now be added the operation of a University Press. The fact that Mr Mark Carroll was summarily dismissed as director of the Harvard University Press has thrown light on the kind of thinking that can lead to expulsion, making a public matter of the nature and justification of university-sponsored publishing.

In the *Harvard University Gazette*, in *Publishers Weekly*, in the *New York Times*, the principals involved have been quoted as follows:

Mr Derek Bok, president of Harvard, stated that there was "absolutely no question" that the Press will not continue to publish "distinguished scholarly works." At the same time, he acknowledged that he intends to reduce the deficit of the press "because . . . we must revise our priorities."

Mr Steven Hall, the vice-president to whom the director of the Press was answerable, stated that "the basic direction of the press will continue to be as it always has been, to pursue its objective of publishing scholarly books. But we must minimise our losses in order to keep up our standards."[1] Which standards are these? If they are the standards of scholarship by which the press selects "distinguished scholarly works," then by definition they will not minimise losses, because the most distinguished of such books are accessible to the smallest number of scholars.

Even Mr Carroll said "we do not wish willingly to reduce our publishing programme. [But] we must perforce avoid investing university funds in books that are not wanted or needed or feasible for us." Not wanted or needed by whom? What is wanted by a University Press staff is not necessarily the same thing that is wanted by the university's administration, or by its faculty, let alone by a set of highly specialised scholars who may be scattered anywhere about the globe.

The essential question is: What is university publishing worth? An article in the *New York Times* (3 April 1972) asked: "How far can a university press go in serving scholarship without upsetting the financial resources of the parent body at a time of hardship?" The issue is not whether scholarship is worthwhile: that is assumed. It is whether universities should be in the business of publishing scholarly works.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES are hard up. When "the going was good" it was possible to argue that if something has value, it should be supported even if one wasn't sure of who would pick up the tab. But "at a time of hardship" accountability is called for; unfortunately, those best able to understand what something costs are not always those best able to judge its value.

What, then, does a university want from its press?

What an institution as a corporate body can be said to *want* will vary with the particular people who are empowered to decide its priorities. These

MORRIS PHILIPSON, *novelist and critic, has been Director of the University of Chicago Press for the past five years.*

[1] I have been given to understand that, over and above its income from sales, rights, permissions, etc., and its unearned income from the Belknap endowment, if the operating expenses of the Harvard University Press exceed its income, the deficit has to be covered by the parent university. Apparently, the amount of the deficit got "out of control." In the fiscal year 1968–69 the deficit was about $100,000; in 1969–70 it became approximately $200,000; but in 1970–71, the crucial fiscal year for American universities, it shot up to $500,000.

There are some 60-odd university presses in the United States. Three years ago there were 66 members of the Association of American University Presses; in 1971 there were 69, but in the course of 1972 a few of them were put "on probation" by their parent universities and during the present year some half-dozen universities must decide whether to discontinue the operations of their presses.

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must vary with the individual administrator's taste and training and judgment. Despite variations, certain generalisations can be envisaged, because there are desires, or at least classes of desires, held in common by the administrators of most universities.

In *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, W. I. Thomas contends that human beings manifest four elemental classes of wishes—namely: *(1)* the wish for new experience; *(2)* the wish for security; *(3)* the wish for recognition; and *(4)* the wish for response.

In gratification of the wish for new experience, a university may associate its prestige with a publication that makes a significant original contribution to scholarship. This wish is satisfied by the delight it takes in publishing whatever is important in advancing an academic discipline. From the point of view of the general public, more often than not the work is, simply by definition, out of step with what appears to be desirable at the moment, because no need comes to be publicly felt until someone proposes a new idea in such a way as to engage popular concern. In other words, what is relevant in popular culture today may be anywhere from ten to a hundred years behind the times in regard to originality of thought. During the past four years, the two most obvious examples are public concern for Environmental Studies under the concept of Ecology and for the life of Negroes in the United States under the concept of Black Studies. The publications of American commercial presses are anywhere from ten to forty years behind original scholarly work published by university presses in precisely those fields.

It goes without saying that there *cannot* be immediate popular appreciation of such novelty, innovation, originality, or importance because only the free-lance intellectual and the academic scholar know which questions in any given discipline are the ones to which they are most eager to hear of possible answers. It is exactly in this sense that scholarly publishing is specialised and that is what gives sharpness to the question asked in the *New York Times*:

> If budgetary considerations become dominant in the policies of an academic press, what will happen to the highly specialized books that no commercial publisher is likely to touch?

The popular mind readily grants the distinction between pure and applied science and recognises that what seems arcane, obscure, and devoid of usefulness to other than an élite minority of scholars in one generation may become of inestimable practical value to a later generation. Commercial publishers and the public at large are quite willing to leave such works, ostensibly devoid of speedy cultural or financial return, to the presses of universities for them to subsidise "uneconomically".

It is one thing for a university to believe in the originality of every work its press publishes; but it is another accurately to predict possible importance. Quite properly, it is hoped that each one of the books[2] makes its contribution to a specialised audience no matter how small; but whether a book may have significance above and beyond that cannot be anticipated with prescience. In a newspaper interview a movie producer was once reported as saying he had five films in production that year and one of them would make ten million dollars. When asked, "Which one?" he shrugged his shoulders and said, "That's the only thing I can't predict." When Professor Stanley Elkins's monograph, an experiment in psycho-history entitled *Slavery*, was first published in 1959, it was reasonable that the hardcover edition should number 2,500 copies. Since its appearance in a paperback edition in 1963, it has steadily sold approximately 30,000 copies a year. When the new translations of *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, first began to appear, only 2,000 copies of each volume were printed. In the past twelve years, in a variety of editions, the cumulative sales have come to total more than a million copies.

One financially successful publication may enable a Press to pay for five to ten works a year which it otherwise could not afford. Into this exceedingly small category fall those books that commercial publishers begrudge university presses. And that grudging criticism of unfair competition, because of a tax-free status, bespeaks only their passion for profits and not a concern for the distinction that accrues to those who invest in intellectual advance.

THE WISH FOR SECURITY applies to scholarship as well as to financial sufficiency.

Excitement may come from originality of thought, but it must be made secure by its scholar-

[2] How many books are published each year by American university presses? The most specific figures available are for calendar year 1971, based on the A.A.U.P. summary of what a total of 66 presses reported:

New titles:	
hardback only	1,738
paperback only	295
simultaneous hardcover & paperback	173
Revised editions:	
hardcover only	33
paperback only	17
simultaneous hardcover & paperback	13
Paperback editions of previous published hardcover books	230
Total	2,499

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ship. The traditions of learning vary considerably among the so-called "fields" of academia, from the physical and biological sciences through the social sciences to the humanities; but respect for and maintenance of the traditions within each discipline are the indispensable conditions for contributing to scholarship—without which an author cannot be a member of the club. It is a fraternity open to anyone who will play by the rules of intellectual cooperation: the essence of which is that the fewest possible propositions should be taken on faith alone; that every argument must be made as demonstrable as possible within the conditions for evidence and persuasion in each discipline. Doctors disagree in all fields, but they agree to disagree as objectively as they can—the indispensable practical principle of their rationality being that the formulations of their thoughts are as testable as possible. Those who guard the standards of scholarly traditions, therefore, try to guarantee fulfilment of the wish for security in so far as the scholarship of university publications is concerned.

The financial security of a University Press is a very different matter indeed. Although it is not a business undertaken in order to make a profit, it should be operated in as businesslike a manner as its staff is equal to. But whether, like the University of Chicago, its Press was founded in the 1890s or, like Howard University in Washington, D.C., it has just established one in 1972—the simple fact is that any university must lose money in order to found a Press. It must be prepared to invest between $100,000 and a quarter-of-a-million dollars annually for at least five years before its Press can have enough of a back-list to approach the condition of earning its own keep. It is possible that "earning its own keep" may come to mean operating on a break-even budget. That could become the requirement the parent university places on its Press, once its volume of business arrives at the point where income from the sales of its books is equal to maintaining its overhead costs plus its investment in the publication of new books. Beyond that it is conceivable, but much less likely, that a University Press may, over and above breaking even, operate with a surplus which then can be contributed to university general funds.

But there is no shame to be imputed to a university if it knowingly decides to support a Press operating at a deficit, any more than it would be deemed shameful for it to finance an outpatient clinic which might operate at a deficit. A university is not a profit-making organisation although, if it is managed badly enough, it could go into bankruptcy. As an institution that should constantly re-examine and re-evaluate its purpose in relation to its means, its rock-bottom basis of solvency is its ability to support continued existence. But granting continuity, it must not think of $50,000 or $100,000 or $150,000 of deficit a year in support of its Press as a bad financial investment, as if it were amateurishly playing the stock market or ashamed of itself for losses at a gambling casino. Its subsidy is not to be mistaken for a commercial investment, the purpose of which is to satisfy the desire of making a profit.[3]

Just as there is a hidden contradiction between the first two elemental classes of wishes—because the sources of new experience are sometimes in conflict with the conditions of security—so is there an inherent contradiction between the second set of wishes—for recognition and for response—because what distinguishes one from others is what makes it difficult to achieve a reassuring response from others.

THE WISH FOR RECOGNITION expresses a desire to achieve distinction in the eyes of the public. Whether it is pursued to martyrdom in a spiritual cause or by eccentricity in forms of "showing-off", whether it conduces to achieving heroism or merely pomposity, it is a means of attracting attention that marks one out as different, as special, and, it is hoped, as superior. When thought of with derogation it may be called vanity; when conceived of with admiration it is appreciated as the ambition to excel. This wish for recognition may start with the naïveté of desiring undying fame, but even at its most sophisticated level it remains concerned with how well people who do not know you may come to think of you.

In so far as it has become commonplace to think of reputation as manufactured and likely to be meretricious—an "image"—the appearance may have little or no correspondence to the reality. It may be spurious. But to the extent that a reputation is authentic, is genuinely earned, it is the honest achievement of a good name.

Thoughtful people have been aware for centuries of the sense in which they value high public esteem, despite the fact that it is inestimable.

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[3] The total of university press subsidies is difficult to identify because no two university accounting systems are identical. In the 1971 industry survey, only 27 university presses reported for some of the categories out of a total of 39.

The 1971 industry statistics made public by the Association of American Publishers state that, on the basis of 39 university presses reporting:

the estimated value of subsidies in free services and facilities was	$1,917,000
the estimated value of direct subsidy for individual titles amounted to	1,270,000
general subsidies came to	2,245,000
These three items total	$5,432,000

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Francesco Guicciardini, the 16th-century Florentine historian and diplomat, wrote in his *Maxims and Reflections:*

> You can see at every turn the benefits you derive from having a good name, a good reputation. But they are few compared to those you do not see. These come of their own accord, without your knowing the cause, brought about by that good opinion people have of you.

Such benefits, though they are felt to exist, are impossible to calculate. They consist of an assumed "echo effect" which cannot be measured but may be compared with the advantages of the individual style of a person who charms. To the extent that the desire for recognition is from the public at large, the sources of feed-back are necessarily amorphous and indefinable. In the instance of how a university's *prestige* is enhanced by the publications of its Press, specific assessment is not possible although they contribute to those benefits that "come of their own accord, without your knowing the cause." What a Press publishes contributes to the reputation of the parent university, redounding to its well-being as a whole rather than merely to the advantage of a particular department of that university (even if the author is on its faculty). The advancement of a field through publication is in no sense limited to any one university; whereas the cumulative effect of a publishing programme contributes to how well the parent university is thought of in general.

That a university should exercise the desire for recognition through a publishing programme (among other means, of course) is perfectly consistent with the profoundly democratic principle that infuses every area of performance supported by universities—namely, that the findings of scholarly research become publicly available. The most important sense in which the claim is made for public communication, for the sharing of research in order to make every new development accessible to anyone working with related materials, underlines the genuinely social nature of the enterprise that is the life of the mind. To estimate the degree of importance of this unchallenged assumption, one would have only to imagine the consequences if the administrators of a university promulgated a *ukase* prohibiting its faculty from publishing (making public in any form) the results of research achieved at that university.

By the same token, it is the social nature of the intellectual enterprise which prevents a university from restricting its Press to works written by members of its own faculty. In so far as a Press staff has a character of its own, it will express its ideas in a coherent programme. It will try to emphasise one sort of thing while recognising its inability to handle or concentrate on another sort of thing. This may happen to be in harmony with what is represented by strong forces in departments of its own university or it may have no such direct relationship. The Press must be as free in its range for selection as the scholar is free to communicate his findings. On the list of the candidates for the National Book Awards in 1972, for example, the Harvard University Press is listed as the publisher of four nominees. Two of the books—*A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls and *The Insect Society* by Edward O. Wilson—were written by members of the Harvard University faculty. The other two—*New England Dissent, 1630–1833,* and *After Great Pain: The Inner Life of Emily Dickinson*—were written by William G. McLoughlin at Brown University and John Cody, Director of the High Plains Comprehensive Community Mental Health Center in Hays, Kansas. Of the three nominees published by the University of Chicago Press that year, not one of them was the work of a University of Chicago faculty member.

What gratifies the desire for recognition through the publications of its Press contributes to the fulfilment of that university's wish for a high reputation—as a whole—with the general public.

THE WISH FOR RESPONSE turns not upon the amorphous enhancement of a good name but on the concrete sense of appreciation by particular individuals. This is especially difficult to sustain because people tend to imagine that when an organisation has distinguished itself at all, appreciation is no longer needed or hoped for; whereas a university's desire to engender personal response through its publishing programme may be fulfilled only by how an author or a reader, a reviewer, a prize committee, a chairman, a dean, a trustee—each, in effect, a judge of its publications—indicates approval.

Even before attaining any special distinction as a publisher, the probability of receiving adequate response is minimised by a psychological difficulty: not only readers but authors think of a Press as a transparent medium. This is easy to do because, if it performs its functions effectively, it should be invisible. Therefore, they think of a publishing house as they do of the post office or the telephone company. One party has a message to deliver, the other party is waiting to receive it; the publisher does nothing but facilitate the delivery. This is as naïve as it would be to think that books grow on trees, that they are the products of a flawless Garden of Eden of the mind. It is easy to caricature the authors and readers of that enormous class. These innocents think of publishers as impediments. First of all,

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publishers take too long to make a decision; then too long to produce the book. They have inadequate distribution facilities ("Why aren't there ten copies of my book at the drugstore in Main Street, Kansas?"); then their prices are too high. They use paper that is too thin (or too thick); the type is too small. Both the jacket and the binding faded even though the book had been left on the porch of a summer cottage only through July and August. There weren't enough illustrations, maps, graphs, or charts—to say nothing of: "When will it come out in paperback at one-sixteenth of its present price?"

The process of publishing consists of an elaborate set of details, no one of which is important unless it is overlooked or poorly executed. The desire for response may be satisfied by the author who shows appreciation for those functions performed—knowing the quality of the work that has gone into editing, design, and manufacture. At the best, he may even know something of the marketing functions (sales, publicity, promotion, and advertising) and of the business functions (warehousing, billing, and shipping), to say nothing of the preparation of information regarding sales and royalties.

NOT SINCE WILLIAM BLAKE has an author of any importance acted as his own designer, printer, and bookseller; and he would not have done so if a publisher had been willing to take him on. Of course, a period might be approaching during which authors may have something of the experience of acting as publishers themselves. Given the marvel of the photoduplicating machine, anyone who writes can produce a work in fairly large quantities at modest prices. He can warehouse it in his bedroom closet and advertise it in the "PERSONAL" column of the *New York Review of Books* or the *Saturday Review* or the *New Statesman.* He may package it and stamp it and mail it himself, and so, with a minimal investment, learn something about the functions publishers actually perform.

Abner Dean once drew two parallel psychoportraits. The one entitled "Autobiography" shows someone perilously climbing up through a jagged chasm while hostile arms hurl rocks from both sides; "Biography" shows the same scene in which all of the arms are extended in gestures of support, aid, and comfort. The truth, as usual, lies somewhere in between. And so does the degree of response which a university can enjoy in regard to its publishing programme.

But probably for lack of adequate response a university may tend to puff itself up regarding its own Press and possibly overdo the sense of its own significance in order to redress the balance. This is not difficult to understand. Edward Bulwer-Lytton in *England and the English,* writing 150 years ago, asked rhetorically: "Are we not all modest when we feel ourselves estimated at what we consider our just value, and all inclined to presume in proportion as we fear we are slighted?"

IF THE WAYS IN WHICH these four elemental desires may be satisfied constitute the value of the Press to its parent university, it is now appropriate to ask what price this costs the university.

To the uninitiated mind, the only costs attending a publication are the bills from the printer—or, in other words, the specific costs for manufacturing the physical object—whereas, in fact, those make up less than half of the costs of a book.

What are called "printers' bills" are divided between composition or engraving, on the one hand, and edition costs, *i.e.,* paper, printing, and binding, on the other, totalling roughly 45 per cent of the publisher's costs. One must then add approximately 10 per cent for royalty. Thus, about 55 per cent of whatever a publisher takes in on the sale of a book goes to cover what is called *cost of goods sold.* This is about half of his total costs—because all other costs are dealt with as "overhead", the half that no one thinks about. It is made up of the salaries of every member of the staff; the expenses for office and warehouse space; advertising, direct mail, and catalogues; heat, electricity, and water; the preparation of invoices for each order; wrapping for each package, and so on. This comes to approximately 45 per cent of costs. In other words: for every dollar that is taken in, 55 cents goes out to cover the cost of goods sold and 45 cents goes into paying for overhead.

Overhead costs must be thought of as the amount of money which makes publication of any book *possible;* the cost of goods sold must be thought of as the amount of money that makes any particular book *actual.*

The shocker for most people who have no direct experience of publishing is the answer to the following question: What would you say it costs to publish a University Press book? Answer: $15,000. The average would show a book of about 300 pages; the composition cost would be at least $3,000; the cost of a first printing of 2,500 copies would be about $4,000. Royalty on such a printing would come to about $1,000. That totals $8,000. Overheads would amount to 45 per cent of the cost of goods sold, bringing the total to approximately $15,000. It follows

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then that in the first year a university wishes to subsidise the publication of ten books it must be prepared to spend about $150,000.

Does that sound extravagant? Consider how it compares with other functions being performed at a university. By one form of accounting[4] for a university budget, for instance, during the fiscal year 1970–71 at the University of Chicago, the Law School cost $830,000 in academic salaries and fringe benefits and $1,530,000 in "support." All costs referring to support of members of the faculty can be thought of as comparable to overhead costs at a Press; all academic salary and fringe benefit expenses may be thought of as comparable to cost of goods sold for the books published in one year by that Press. The amount of "support" funds is a calculation of what makes the existence of that sole department possible and is, therefore, exclusive of indirect support such as expenditures that are needed for all departments—like those for the general university library, central administration, general use buildings, the university grounds, security, gymnasium, student health, etc. Of the total then for the Law School in that year, for every dollar spent on faculty salaries and fringe benefits $1.84 was spent on support.

Now, these ratios differ from one department and professional school to another. The Physics Department at that same university in fiscal year 1970–71 showed $623,000 in academic salaries and $1,254,000 in support—a ratio of $2.00 of support for every dollar of salary. The Economics Department cost $507,000 in academic salaries and $606,000 in support—or $1.20 of support for every dollar of academic salary. In the Department of Biophysics support came to $1,037,000 as against $260,000 for academic salaries and fringe benefits—a ratio of four to one.

If a university operates one year on a budget of $110,000,000 and has a faculty of 1,100 members, it becomes more foolish than not to say that it costs $100,000 per man-year, unless one takes into account the distinction between how much of the university's budget goes into support and how much into salaries. By the same token, the area of "overhead" which makes the operation of the Press possible is open to a great variety of interpretations.

NO TWO PUBLISHING HOUSES calculate their overhead costs in exactly the same way. There are fixed costs and there are variable costs. Should the total in any one fiscal year be evenly distributed over each of the books published that year, or should the allocation of those costs be given a different percentage in every single case? How one answers that question determines the list price of each book. Should the percentage of overhead costs be brought down as the number of books published goes up? Obviously, if an overhead budget of $75,000 enables a university to publish ten books in one year, it might be possible for that same staff to handle fifteen books the next year. But then the variable costs must be fudged in order to make up the difference. For example, if there is a budget of *X* number of dollars for advertising ten books and that same amount is to be applied to fifteen books, then one way of handling it would be for each book to receive one-third less money. The variations are endless. But the concept of economy does not mean doing something as cheaply as possible. It means using financial resources as effectively as possible.

Setting a list price on University Press books is to invite unending negative criticism. Of course, it comes from the book-buyer who is shocked that anything costs more than five dollars; but to the publisher it comes first from the appalled author himself who, either with outrage or with anguish, asks: "Why, when the book is only 300 pages long, are you asking $12.50 a copy?" Just as the uninitiated assume that printing bills are the only publishing costs, so they assume that the length of a book is the only determinant of its price, whereas what conditions its price is the relationship among *(1)* the cost of composition; *(2)* the number of copies of the first printing; *(3)* the author's royalty; and *(4)* the discount at which it will be sold.

The discount (least of all taken into account by the outsider) refers to the difference between the list price and the amount of money that the publisher actually receives on each sale, depending on whether it might be a textbook sold at 20 per cent less than list price, a specialist or professional book sold at about 30 per cent off list price, or a general (so-called "trade") book sold at 40 or more per cent off list price to bookstore buyers. Wholesaler discounts are frequently higher than these. The aspect of this interrelationship of the four conditioning factors that is most striking can be seen in the following way. The composition cost of some $3,000 for setting type for the pages of, let us say, a 300-page book is the same whether the first printing is for 2,000 copies or for 200,000 copies. When it is reasonable for the first printing to consist of only 2,500 copies, then the entire $3,000 investment in composition must be divided among just those 2,500 copies, increasing the list price to a much greater degree than the share of composition cost appears in the price of almost any

[4] *Full Cost Analysis of the University of Chicago* (an unpublished report by the staff of the Economic Study Commission).

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commercial publisher's book (the first printing of which is not likely to be less than 6,000 copies).

The list price of each book depends on the market expectations as expressed in the publisher's gamble on the quantity of the first printing. If it could be believed that within the first five years of publication *Archaic Roman Religion* by Georges Dumézil or *Education and Social Change in Ghana* by Philip Foster or *Dynamics of Nuclear Reactors* by David L. Hetrick would be likely to sell 20,000 copies, then issuing a first edition in a printing of that quantity would enable the price to be much lower than each one of those books carries. But the very specialisation of the market anticipated for the sale of such works requires that the buyer share more of the financial risk with the sponsoring university than the purchaser of a popular book has to share with the commercial publisher. One measure of the meaning of specialisation might be made vivid by pointing out that in 1900, when the population of the United States was approximately 100 million, it was appropriate for the University of Chicago Press to publish a first printing of John Dewey's *The School and Society* in an edition of 2,500 copies. In 1973, when the population of the United States is over 200 million, it is still appropriate for the average scholarly monograph to be published in a first printing of 2,500 copies. The number of scholars may have increased absolutely with the total number of the population, but the fragmentation of academic disciplines has resulted in a relative number which has not increased at all.

THERE IS AT THE PRESENT TIME a means of making scholarly works available which would reduce costs to next to nothing. This is the technical innovation known as *microfiche*. Some day, possibly in the next two or three years, every scholar may have a desk-model microfiche reader of his own the way he now has his own dictionary or his own typewriter. Should this medium of publication gain acceptance, it would be economically feasible to "publish" works of such specialisation as may have a market of only 750 to 1,000 buyers. The resistance to it, however, is aesthetic and psychological. You cannot cuddle up with a microfiche.

Moreover, almost no author who was ever born imagines that his book has a market of so small a number. And publishers have been proved wrong in their estimates of audience. But these are the rare exceptions, which is what makes the story-telling exciting. The nature of professionalism in publishing is precisely to guess accurately in a majority of cases.

Editorial selection is at the heart of such professionalism. In contrast to the pejorative expression that University Presses publish books "no one else" would touch is the actual experience of University Presses, which decline a very much greater number of possible publications than they support. At the University of Chicago Press, our records show that for every book we publish we have turned down ten—completed manuscripts, partial manuscripts, proposals, or prospectuses. The unrecognised fact is that the publications of a university reflect its selections from an extremely large number of possibilities. But this deserves to be made explicit so that no one misunderstands the function of a University Press as that of putting out in book form *all* the manuscripts submitted to it or all of those rejected by commercial publishers. The contrast needs to be kept clearly in mind. University Presses have no monopoly on scholarly publishing. It was at one time said, not without justification, that Alfred A. Knopf was *the* primary publisher of scholarly books in the United States. Still, more contributions to scholarship are published by universities than by commercial presses, Without them the public distribution and communication of the findings and speculations of academics would be severely restricted.

If the editorial selection process is the heart of professionalism in university publishing, then all university administrators must give serious attention to the criticism voiced by Chester Kerr, Director of the Yale University Press, in the *New York Times Book Review,* (7 May 1972), where he is quoted as saying: "Too many books are being published. The whole system that requires scholars to be measured by publication is responsible for more books than are wanted. Too damned many inferior works are published just to get a promotion." It is the dependency of the faculty selection process on the principle of "publish or perish" that he challenges.

What is wanted? The young academic wants promotion to tenure. The scholar in each field wants anything and everything that can contribute to the advancement of his discipline. The publisher wants the books that will keep his operation financially solvent. The administrator wants what will redound to the prestige of his university as a whole. These are four frequently incompatible desires. But if those who are responsible for making a University Press possible choose to maintain it at all, then the resolution of conflicts among these four competing desires for "what is wanted" must rest on the judgment of the director and editorial staff of the Press, with the approval of their faculty board. If it chooses well, it reaffirms its professionalism; if it chooses badly enough of the

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time, it is doomed. But the possibility of choosing well depends on the coordination of publishing know-how with the sense of scholarship that is its special expertise and what distinguishes it from a commercial publishing house.

It is as easy to make fun of scholarly books as it is simple for the outsider to make fun of anything he does not comprehend (especially if he believes that he will never be on the inside). It is easy to caricature books selected for publication by University Presses as "hard-core pedantry." A monograph on Byzantine manuscript illumination or the elaboration of an hypothesis explaining the enserfment of the Russian peasantry during the seventeenth century is as easy to sneer at as—as what?—as if it were the plaything of the rich, a trifle, a Fabergé Easter egg for the Czar (when there's real work to be done). Imagine the guffaws of laughter in the editorial offices at Random House or McGraw-Hill or Little, Brown when young Professor So-and-So's letter appears asking if they would be interested in perusing for publication his 600-page, double-spaced typescript interpreting the interrelationships among the novels of Virginia Woolf, or the process of innovation diffusion in rural Sweden, or the adaptation of Roman law in the evolution of the Holy Roman Empire. Silly, isn't it? Not only because it can't make money for a publisher, but isn't it silly in itself? Surely it is as laughable as the desire to make money is to a Cistercian monk. Thorough enjoyment of the joke requires membership in a different coterie, with acceptance of a totally different set of values. The laughter proves one's superiority, indifference, and invulnerability; there's always the hidden fear that what you don't know will hurt you.

THE SELECTION PROCESS for publication is exactly analogous to the ways in which an academic comes to be hired as a member of the faculty of a particular university. The University of Chicago has recently published a notice regarding faculty recruitment procedures which reads, in part, as follows:

> A number of appointments are made each year to the faculty of the University of Chicago. The opportunity to make appointments is of course subject to over-all budget levels for the University and other factors. While the requirements of particular areas must be considered, the University does not, in general, have a fixed number of faculty positions in the various departments and schools. Thus, with the exception of endowed professorships which are restricted to a particular area, there are never "vacancies" in the usual sense, involving the replacement of faculty members in exactly the same areas of specialization or at the same ranks. . . . [We] are therefore involved in a continuous search for candidates possessing those qualities of intellect and training which indicate a strong potential for academic distinction and who may be recommended for appointment consideration. The University welcomes applications from serious candidates who believe they can demonstrate these qualities. . . .

By paraphrasing that notice, every university press director can make the following declaration:

> The opportunity to publish books with this University Press is of course subject to over-all budget levels for the University and other factors. While the requirements of particular areas of specialization must be considered, the Press does not, in general, have a fixed number of openings for publication. Thus, with the exception of individual subsidies which are restricted to particular books, there are never "vacancies" in the usual sense, involving the publication of a work in exactly the same area of specialization or under the same contractual terms. Editors responsible for works in each of the academic disciplines in which the Press publishes are involved in a continuous search for manuscripts possessing those qualities of intellect and effectiveness which indicate a strong potential for distinction and which may be recommended for publication. The Press welcomes submissions from serious authors who believe their works will demonstrate these qualities.

Obviously, a University Press ought to be operated economically. Still, even if it is very well managed, it is no point of pride that it has a minimal deficit or no deficit at all. Good management should be taken for granted. But just as universities do not have a monopoly of scholarly publishing, so is it true that commercial publishers do not have a monopoly of good management. The fantasy that "professionalism" in publishing is limited to a dozen high-powered commercial houses in New York and Boston is a myth. Infinitely more important than the concern over each University Press's economic efficiency is the idea that each of them be managed in a manner appropriate to the parent university. There is no one best way to operate a Press, any more than there is any one best way to teach a particular course offered at a university. When an academic is invited to join a faculty of a particular university, what is expected of him is that he will teach as well as *he* can; that does not exclude the possibility that he may improve the ways in which he teaches as his experience enriches him. But it certainly does not require that he teach in the way that someone else, assumed to be "the best" in his field, may do so elsewhere.

THE WORTH OF a University Press is as relative—*i.e.*, conditioned by conflicts of incompatible social demands—as every other virtue in life. Worth depends upon the value system of the one who is making the judgment. One may know the potential value of something *and* its price, but if one is a tightwad then the

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worth to one is enhanced if one gets what one wants at a cost below its value. If one is a snob, one gets what one wants only if the cost is above its value. But between those two extremes—of the gratification of stinginess or the gratification of status symbolism—is the ultimately desirable balance of paying the just price for the value.

In a republic besieged by high-minded and raucously vocal innocence, those who are ultimately responsible for the operation of the university may be unnerved by the thought that $15,000 would keep a Vietnamese hamlet alive for one year, support cancer research, or operate a day-care nursery. Should one publish *Keats and His Poetry* or *The Shape of Utopia* or *Bantu Bureaucracy* under those circumstances? No matter how painful to idealism, there is no contest. The trustees, the administration, the faculty, and the student body are not empowered to use their university's resources to save the world. They are charged with a mission to contribute to research and teaching. What they do here and now *may* come to make possible a better life for every family for the next five hundred years. The advancement of theoretical knowledge may contribute to practical amelioration. *Crescat scientia vita excolatur.*

But which of the works of scholarship may do so is unpredictable and as a result there is a need for all of those that, through the sifting selective process, come to be promulgated by University Presses. The intricate network of socially cooperative relations and responsibilities demonstrated by this process constitutes the complexity of sophisticated human life. One may be appalled by gruesome social problems; but it would be worse to transform universities into agencies of social welfare than it would be to support academic scholarship and its public dissemination, because such a transformation would eliminate the possibility of enhancing human life through systematic knowledge.

According to the published statements, during 1969–70 it cost $139,500,000 to operate the University of Chicago (excluding Argonne National Laboratories). The so-called "auxiliary enterprises" of the university budget, such as dormitories, apartments, dining halls, the book store, and the Press, amount to 12 per cent of that budget—or $16,500,000, which was $357,700 less than the amount required actually to operate those enterprises. As reported in the 1 November 1969 issue of the University *Record:*

> . . . If the budget is to balance, 9·3 million must come from unrestricted gifts—that is, gifts which may be applied to operating expenses, as opposed to gifts for buildings or other specific purposes. Another way of putting this is to say that the University has a planned deficit of over 9 million dollars, accompanied by the hope that sufficient gift money can be raised to meet this deficit. . . . If gift money sufficient to cover the planned deficit is realized and if predictions of income are fulfilled, the University will be able to operate within its budget. But many of the University's needs are not provided for by the operating budget, and these needs can be met only by gifts far in excess of the amount required to balance the budget.

Those who are at the growing tip of something are necessarily out on a limb.

Institutions, like monuments, have running costs. But there is no innate necessity for them to survive. Venice may sink into the Adriatic; temples of the Pharoahs may be submerged by the creation of a lake. Everything depends on who cares about what, and on the character of the leadership that tries to marshal the concern of others.

In London today, across the wide façade of Sir Christopher Wren's great cathedral, is a banner carrying in enormous letters the legend: SAVE ST. PAUL'S APPEAL. Within the building one finds the following statement on a poster in the nave:

> It costs £576 ($1,500) a day to maintain St. Paul's, and that does not include the price of major repairs and renovations. We know you will want to help us to preserve this cathedral with all that it offers in beauty, history, and worship. Thank you.

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THEATRE

Molière à la Mode

By John Weightman

MR TONY HARRISON, the author of the quite brilliant translation/adaptation of *Le Misanthrope*[1] now playing at the National Theatre, was born apparently in Leeds and is domiciled in Newcastle. He is thus as far removed as any Alceste would like to be from the corrupting influences of the metropolis. Yet such is the linguistic flair of poets that he has managed to render Molière's 17th-century French rhyming couplets into ultra-smart, contemporary English, of the sort that is now spoken, presumably, west of obsolescent Mayfair. There is a Chelsea ring about the following lines:

Lovely party! Marvellous do downstairs!
Heard you were up here, though, and thought what luck
to catch Alceste alone. . . . I've read your book.
I know your essays backwards. Read the lot!
We two should get acquainted better, what?

That is Oronte's opening speech. Equally successful, within its own terms of reference, is Philinte's presentation of human nature as being really animal nature:

But when I see self-interest, graft, deceit,
when I see men swindle, steal, lie, cheat,
I feel about as much sense of dismay
as if I'd seen some beast devour its prey,
or if I'd watched, say, monkeys in the zoo
doing what monkeys are supposed to do.
All your diatribes are off the track.
It's basic human nature you attack.
That's your humanity. There's no escape.
These are the antics of the "naked ape."

The stage-set and the clothes are in keeping with this brisk, felicitous language. The scene is a small, upper-drawing-room looking out on to the Elysée Palace in 1966. It has a rich, simple look, and a bar with champagne in one corner. Alceste (Alec McCowen), *l'homme aux rubans verts*, is soberly dressed in dark-green velvet; Célimène (Diana Rigg) is delicious in expensive backless sheaths that cling precariously to her nakedness; Arsinoé, the man-chaser, (Gillian Barge) is loaded up self-consciously with modern gear, and so on. The combination of all these factors makes one think, while the first act is getting under way, that one is about to witness a splendid performance. It seems that one's bright contemporaries have actually accomplished the miracle of transporting a 17th-century masterpiece into the 20th century. What a marvellous fun-thing this is going to be! But no, in Act II one's enthusiasm begins to cool, and in the later stages, in spite of one or two more successful fragments, the whole enterprise dwindles into a well-executed gimmick.

THE BASIC REASON is the obvious one that even a masterpiece may not fully transcend its period, and therefore cannot be coherently translated, with all its relevant details, into another social setting. Just as Jonathan Miller's attempt to put *The Merchant of Venice* into the late 19th century foundered—or so it seemed to me [ENCOUNTER, July 1970]—on the simple fact that the position of a Jewish money-lender in the context of the Renaissance was utterly different in some vital respects from that of a Jewish financier in 19th-century capitalistic society, so *Le Misanthrope* cannot sound altogether convincing in the 20th century, because general and sexual *mores* have changed.

In comparing General de Gaulle to Louis XIV, the *Canard Enchaîné* was making a valid joke, which is amply illustrated in the caricatures reproduced in the programme. But, even so, the Elysée under De Gaulle was not Versailles, and the joke cannot be extended to the point of making Alceste and Célimène, two characters on the outer fringes of court life, wholly credible in the modern fashionable world.

Some things, certainly, can be adapted. In the portrait-scene, for instance, modern types can be pilloried, instead of 17th-century ones, and they are very cleverly chosen. But Alceste's salon-quarrel with Oronte over the quality of the sonnet cannot justifiably be made the occasion for a

[1] *The Misanthrope*. By MOLIÈRE. English version by TONY HARRISON. Rex Collings, £1

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20th-century official intervention. Molière brings in *la maréchaussée*, whose function it was to prevent the illegal duel that might have ensued, and he gets a joke out of the unapologetic nature of Alceste's apology. In Mr Harrison's version, Alceste is summoned by "an official of the Académie Française" to answer for his remarks before the assembled Academicians who are "at midnight taking their brandy and cigar" at Maxim's. The modern Académie, needless to say, has no such censorious function and no officials to summon people to its presence. Besides, after watching its members totter uncertainly to their seats on the occasion of one of their public sessions, I find it hard to imagine them drinking anything stronger than *tisane* of an evening, and I suspect that most of them are tucked up in bed by ten-thirty. Just as unconvincing in the modern context is the letter-scene, which is given exactly as in the original. But a modern Célimène would probably not write letters; she would use the telephone, and would be correspondingly more difficult to catch out. And even if she wrote letters, her modern suitors, being no longer supported by any public moralism, as in the 17th century, would not simultaneously brandish them in her face. They might still have done so in Victorian society; in the late 20th century, such behaviour would be eminently "uncool", crass, old-fashioned. I don't think it is pedantic to make these points. The ultra-modern language is just not in keeping with parts of the action, and the discrepancies jar immediately.

ON THE SPECIFIC SEXUAL ISSUE, Molière is slightly ambiguous in a perfectly acceptable way, given the 17th-century background. It is stressed in the play that Célimène is a widow. In those days of high mortality rates and of arranged marriages between older men and very young girls, widows of twenty were not uncommon. Célimène has to be a widow to receive men as guests in her salon; as an unmarried person, she could not have done so. But Molière does not suggest that she goes to bed with any of the men; she is presented mainly as a flirt who likes to keep a lot of men in play for the fun of doing so, instead of deciding which of them is to be her next husband. She is still a thoughtless young girl, whose malicious sprightliness runs away with her, and the gossip about her is presumably to be taken as untrue. Her suitors are like fighting cocks, precisely because she has not yet revealed her true preference. Accomplished as Miss Rigg's performance is, she, on the contrary, sounds like a sophisticated divorcée, nearer thirty than twenty, who may, or may not, have been to bed with all four men, but probably has, in so far as the men are heterosexual enough to want to go to bed with her. Certainly, the atmosphere is permissive; champagne flows, pot is smoked, the *petits marquis* are wildly camp. The portrait-scene between them and Célimène is quite charming, but it is played as a scene of connivance between a fairly mature bitch and two gay boys, not as a temporary alliance between a high-spirited minx and two womanising fops. The homosexual implications run counter to the text and, in any case, if Dorante and Arcaste are gay, Alceste need not be jealous of them in the same fashion. The sexual tensions and distinctions of the original have been blurred, without the action being properly adapted to mid-20th-century behaviour, either in Paris or in London.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT WEAKNESS in this version is the character of Alceste, who, in spite of Mr McCowen's talent, becomes in the end a bit of a bore. Traditionally, this is a very difficult part to play, because Alceste has to be at once comic and likeable, superficially in the wrong and fundamentally in the right. If he shows up badly against Philinte, the performance doesn't quite come off. He is, of course, a development of a mediaeval humour, the atrabilious or splenetic type, and Molière had the original idea of making him demand sincerity in a social setting—the court—from which sincerity is by definition excluded. Moreover, the beauty of the contrast between Alceste and his best friend, Philinte, is that their opposing philosophies are equally based on the concept of "nature." Philinte proclaims that men have the fixed nature of animals; there is nothing to be done about them; the wise man looks upon most of his fellow-creatures as irredeemable beasts, to be accepted for what they are. Thus Philinte is "good", but his goodness is thin, merely accidental and consistent with determinism and moral despair. Alceste, on the other hand, is paradoxically in despair, precisely because he doesn't want to despair of man. As Oronte says, in the original French of his sonnet:

. . . on désespère
Alors qu'on espère toujours.

Alceste objects strenuously to this as an "unnatural" conceit:

Et ce n'est point ainsi que parle la nature.

but he himself, ironically, is an example of it, both in love, which is what Oronte's sonnet is about, and in his general attitude towards humanity. Alceste wants all men to be more than animals, at the same time as he wants them to be

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"natural." Yet the hypocrisy he is objecting to is, as it happens, a feature by which they transcend the animal world; hypocrisy is the means they use to postpone the immediate operation of their animal natures. It is natural for man, who is different from the animals, to be unnatural. Culture, in fact, can be defined as man's natural unnaturalness, and how are we to distinguish "good" unnaturalness from "bad" unnaturalness, in the name of nature? It is because he is caught in this tangle, which is comic from one angle and tragic from another, that Alceste is such a profound dramatic character.

NOW, IT IS a peculiar merit of Molière's writing that, while it is never obtrusively poetic, but always square, firm and commonsensical, it bestows dignity on Alceste even in his most extreme and self-contradictory moments. The tone never departs from a certain central rightness. The actor uttering the French words is supported by them in the delicate task of not allowing Alceste to degenerate into a ranting grumbler. Mr Harrison, partly perhaps because of the struggle to follow the sense in English verse, and partly no doubt because the stamp of neo-classical finality is so difficult to achieve in modern English, often allows the language to become too busy and fussy. Alceste, the enemy of conceits, is made to invent new and complicated conceits, instead of accepting the half-effaced images of everyday language.

Consider, for instance, the differences between the original French of one of his indignant speeches to Célimène and the English version:

Je sais que sur les voeux on n'a point de puissance,
Que l'amour veut partout naître sans dépendance,
Que jamais par la force on n'entra dans un coeur,
Et que toute âme est libre à nommer son vainqueur:
Aussi ne trouverois-je aucun sujet de plainte,
Si pour moi votre bouche avoit parlé sans feinte;
Et, rejetant mes voeux dès le premier abord,
Mon coeur n'auroit eu droit de s'en prendre qu'au sort.

Love's something no-one has much power over.
Its growth's spontaneous in every lover.
Force is quite useless. Hearts can't be coerced
Except if they consent to submit first,
and if, at the very outset, Célimène,
you'd rejected my advances there and then,
I'd've only had my luck not you to blame. . . .

The translation is clever, ingenious, but perceptibly tortured. "Much" introduces a reservation not in the original; the force of "*veut* partout naître" has dropped out; the beautiful simplicity of lines 3 and 4 has been replaced by a slight verbal clutter; and the last line which, in French, could figure in a tragedy, in English does not rise above a musical-comedy jingle. In making these observations, I am not, of course, presuming to criticise Mr Harrison. I doubt whether St Jerome, the patron saint of translators, could have done any better. I am simply pointing out that through the change of languages and styles, Alceste is diminished and so Mr McCowen has less to go on in building up an acceptable character. And, generally speaking, this English *Misanthrope* gives us, in place of the coherent ambiguities of a masterpiece, intermittent bursts of smart entertainment.

From Nature

Keeping it at bay is enough. Not having green fingers
Or whatever it is that makes things grow and blossom,
I am best at cutting down and cutting back,
Enjoying that and leaving the rest to chance.

And it goes on growing whatever happens,
Weeds thicken even along the track
Where feet tread daily and the cattle come
On heavy hooves where the heavy air never stirs.

The easy destructive tools—sickle and blade,
Whining saw, malevolent axe, scattering mower—
Must be put aside, time lay down its scythe
For work that moves with the earth's heavier power
And the stubborn tools good for growing with:
Brawny mattock, tough hoe, broad spade.

Anthony Thwaite

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NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from France

New Society, Old Politics

By François Bondy

THERE WERE numerous political surprises in store for anyone who witnessed the recent events in France, especially that most intensive and extensive of French election campaigns. Never was so much innovation coupled with so much tradition. On the one hand, we have more technology and modernity, noticeable mainly in the life-style of the middle classes (which seem to be wealthier and in many respects more privileged than their counterparts anywhere else in Europe), and also some enduring progress at points of contact between State and citizen, (*e.g.* social security offices). On the other, one is faced with the presence of a growing foreign sub-proletariat, the persistent housing and transportation crisis that besets the millions who commute between suburbs and urban centres, and also disconcerting pockets of backward services (*e.g.* the dilapidated telephone system).

French politics display a juxtaposition of technocrats and old-fashioned notabilities, one of whom informed his constituents that he had made personal representations to government departments no less than 20,000 times during the previous legislative period. Mammoth public opinion institutes, staffed by bright "*Sciences po*" (political science) graduates, may soon save voters the trouble of voting because their extrapolations are becoming an ever more accurate measuring-rod of the political terrain. As for the major debates, they are now mounted between star performers on the broadcasting networks. Still, old French ways persist. Candidates parade their past services to a limited audience in nasally dramatic tones; and maladroit pamphlets and placards, quite innocent of the designer's art, commend the electoral merits of honest men and women blessed with a clear and level gaze. Even politicians who call for a new "*qualité de la vie*"—the slogan is at once justified and in vogue—fail to exhibit any feeling for such a quality in their contributions to political window-dressing. Big-city "*enarches*"—graduates of the *École nationale d'administration*—contend with "notables" who are supposed to possess that much-vaunted "human touch" and "sense of personal contact" which computers and the mass media cannot replace.

THERE EXISTS a whole new literature on "*la France pauvre*". Attention is focused on workers whose living standard, though higher than it was, has risen less than in West Germany and Italy; who are compelled to forgo many amenities because of the housing shortage, time lost in travelling and lengthy working hours, and whose experience of everyday life does not quite accord with the glad tidings of the sociological statistician. One of the most successful recent films, *Elle court, elle court la banlieue*, took its inspiration from the book by Brigitte Gros, a politician. It pictures the harried existence of the "*banlieusards*", sometimes comically, sometimes critically, and ends in a street scene which portends something akin to a mass revolt by the enervated commuter.

"*La vie quotidienne*", everyday life—for the first time in a Fifth Republic election, this slogan ousted "*la grandeur*" from its traditional pre-eminence. Finance Minister Valéry Giscard d'Estaing proclaimed that the economic miracle had now to acquire a new "social dimension"; Premier Pierre Messmer conceded that the position of low-paid workers was a blot on the face of modern France. Everyone now recognises that France's so-called "Japanese" economic growth has been accompanied by the emergence of new and glaring inequalities.

MANY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of peasant farmers and agricultural labourers have flocked to the towns and factories in recent years. There they encounter an often diabolical working rhythm and scant safety precautions—a form of "*capitalisme sauvage*" which the welfare state, for all its achievements, is failing to tame. The number of French women who have to work in order to procure the now-familiar range of household appliances is larger than in other Western countries. This is compulsion rather than a symptom of emancipation; and its results can be seen in the distressing growth of hooliganism among adolescents who have no family to look after them.

Research into the living standards of the new French middle class is lacking, but some pointers can be found in perhaps the best political book to be published recently: *Le système Pompidou* by the socialist Gilles Martinet (Editions Du Seuil). This notes that the monthly income appropriate to a modern up-and-comer starts at "*une brique*", or one million old francs (10,000 new francs, but why do sums in new francs when the French decline to?). France is commonly

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accepted as the country with the most "second homes." The possession of a house in the country as well as a flat in town is a minimum requirement of the middle-class living standard. Many metropolitan boutiques display shirts at 200 francs, jumpers and shoes at 400 or 500 francs; and luxury articles such as these seem to find plenty of takers—notably young customers. It was my impression that France's consumer society is comparable only with a section of *nouveau-riche* Northern Italy.

Is it any mystery that "*affaires*" should have been proliferating among the Gaullists? In contrast to the "*Républicains indépendents*", the bulk of whom are materially well-to-do, many Gaullists are people of very modest background. The Parisian atmosphere tempted them to emulate an extremely expensive style of living which could only be maintained by those with links between Paris political influence and important business interests. The high living standard enjoyed by the new (*i.e.* "technocratic") middle class is already taken for granted. In the France of yesterday whose prosperity was less conspicuous, the difference between front-runners and stragglers did not leap to the eye as it does now.

Another two million voters; a changed and, above all, urbanised society; old French industries gripped by crisis, and new industrial centres burgeoning in other regions (Toulouse instead of Lorraine)—these factors help to explain why France's economic miracle is associated with so much latent unrest. Equally, they make it hard to evaluate the prevailing degree of political stability. This has nothing to do with the inequitable distribution of votes between large and small constituencies because the final voting figures of last March tell the same story. As leader of the Left four years ago, François Mitterand rallied about 45% of voters against De Gaulle. The same Left-wing coalition has just turned in a similar performance. The "*Réformateurs*" received as many votes in 1973 as the "*Centre*" did during the 1960s. Regroupings do occur, of course, and even small shifts can be fraught with consequences. The fact nevertheless remains that for the past hundred years French votes have been divided between the Left-wing and Conservative camps in roughly equal proportions. Grand ideological controversies count for less than "*pesanteurs sociologiques*", or the social forces of gravity; and these, in turn, have more to do with traditional modes of behaviour and change more slowly than society itself.

WHAT CURRENTLY appears to be a major novelty is that the *Réformateurs*, who are all out for social change, might constitute the weight that could tip the scales. However, they are hardly a homogeneous political force. Watch Jean Lecanuet and J.-J. Servan-Schreiber appear together in public (solid middle-class provincialism versus brilliant nervy sensationalism)—and become acquainted with individual "*Réformateur*" candidates (some of whom are the most conservative and old-fashioned politicos imaginable), and one cannot fail to perceive that the "*Centre des Réformateurs*" is a house of the four winds. Although this group may well contribute to a political transformation, it, too, should be viewed principally in its relationship with the old and new French middle classes whose privileges do not, despite the "*égalité*" that is so often demanded but never practised, appear to be at risk. On the contrary, perhaps it is they who will chiefly benefit from political regrouping just as they have so far done from the economic miracle.

London Commentary

A Rebirth of Political Economy?

The End of Some Fashionable Myths—By SAMUEL BRITTAN

THE "MARKET ECONOMY" is not at present a popular concept. It has suffered from a widespread, if erroneous, identification with the initial policies of the Heath Government; and the prevalent view is that it received its *coup de grâce* when that Government itself reversed most of these policies and embarked on a highly interventionist path.

It is, of course, no secret that the present Conservative Government came to office without any strategy for dealing with runaway inflation; and the eating of all its early words on the subject of wage-price controls was foreseen by many observers. On other issues too, it has long been pretty clear that a few simple *laissez-faire* slogans will not take us very far in a world of rampant producer-group politics, large spillover

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costs from many activities (such as private motoring) which are not taken into account by the unregulated market, and a perfectly proper public concern for the welfare of the poor and the victims of economic change.

Yet in observing all this, there is a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. There are still strong reasons to suppose that markets must play an important role in any community where personal liberty is to flourish, or even where tensions between different groups are to be kept in check without resort to political repression. It is important—and I have tried to do so in a new book, *Capitalism and the Permissive Society*[1]—to seek the kernel of validity in the case for market forces embedded in the propagandist oversimplifications. It is possible to outline an "economic liberalism", which, so far from harming anything to do with the Monday Club, is part of a broader libertarian tradition in which it goes together with non-interference in private personal conduct and an opposition to the excesses of nationalism at home and abroad. Whatever other criticism can be levelled against such a thesis, it can hardly be said that it follows fashionable opinion.

It is not my aim in what follows to discuss the initial mistakes of the Heath Government, beyond pointing to the misplaced stress on "management" as a panacea, and the unfortunate emphasis in early pronouncements on the sufferings of the lame ducks instead of on the benefits to the consumer that arise from properly working competitive markets. The subject is among those discussed in *Capitalism and the Permissive Society* and a précis of what I have already written there would be an unproductive enterprise. It may be more fruitful if I approach my main theme indirectly with some reflections on the decline of old-fashioned political economy. I shall go on to criticise some features of modern economic orthodoxy, and then to discuss some recent work (mostly American and scarcely known in this country), which may lead to a rebirth of political economy. One of the main preliminary results of this new thinking is to induce a little modesty about the improvements that can be brought about by government action in the political market-place.

IT WAS ONE OF THE STRONG POINTS of 18th-century political economy, as developed by David Hume and Adam Smith, that it started with human beings as they were rather than as some moralists thought they ought to be. The two thinkers were themselves moralists; but they accepted the legitimacy of self-interest, and they believed that the way to reconcile this with the general good was to devise a suitable framework of rules in which self-interest was allowed to operate. A 20th-century representative of this tradition—and hardly a right-wing Conservative—was Bertrand Russell, who declared:

> If men were actuated by self-interest, which they are not—except in the case of a few saints—the whole human race would co-operate. There would be no more wars, no more armies, no more navies, no more atom bombs . . . .[2]

"Self-interest", even of the enlightened variety, is not perhaps the most felicitous term. The main assertion of the classical liberal is that the pursuit of *self-chosen* goals within an appropriate framework of rules is compatible with public harmony. These goals can be altruistic, aesthetic, religious, or of any other variety. In the economic sphere it is rational for an altruistic businessman to work for high profits, along with his competitors—and perhaps put even more effort into the process. His altruism will show itself in what he *does* with his gains rather than in refraining from making them.

Nevertheless, the basic inclination of the early political economists to take human beings as they found them, and to seek rules which did not depend on a fundamental "change of heart", was very much their strong point. One may wonder how this approach developed into modern economics? This is a subject widely regarded as doubly unreal in assuming the possibility of a model world, yet one populated by unattractively consistent and cold-blooded people, always reacting in a predictable way to any given stimulus.

THE TRANSFORMATION I have just caricatured was the natural result of the search for rigour and the growing professionalisation of the subject. Effort was devoted to asking what were the conditions under which the market process achieved not merely a rough harmony, but an *optimum* allocation of resources. Not surprisingly, these were found most unlikely to occur. The existence of "economies of scale", or even the need for taxes on income or commodities, would prevent the optimum from being achieved. These are only the most blatant cases. A little imagination—and mathematics—can always produce new and more subtle elements of fallibility in the working of the "invisible hand." The result was a concentration of interest on how an ideal market would work and on a set of interventionist policy prescriptions for dealing with the numerous departures from it likely to occur in the real world.

[1] Macmillan, £3.95.
[2] Bertrand Russell, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954).

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It would be Luddite to decry the search for greater rigour. It is surely better that government intervention should be based on research rather than on ignorance. But unfortunately this more rigorous approach was achieved at a price. For it tended to assume that the relevant information about people's tastes and behaviour, about production techniques and so on, was *(1)* known to policy-makers, and *(2)* either unchanging, or changing in a predictable way. These are assumptions into which anyone is likely to be drawn who attempts to express economic relations with the aid of *elementary* mathematics and who attempts to make economic forecasts.

This approach has the defect of "assuming away" the main problems of economic policy. *No* human being or central institution (or computer) can hope to have the information—most of it is not easily reducible to statistical form—to work out an *ideal* distribution of resources or even a "second best" one. The role of the market is not to bring about an "optimum" but to act as a signalling device to enable information scattered among millions of people to be diffused through the community and to be used as a guide to action. Like all signalling systems, the market is of course capable of improvement.

Another disadvantage of current orthodoxy is that many economists have acquired a vested interest in the existence of stable, discoverable, numerical relationships between phenomena such as incomes and consumption, or the money supply and the price level, or exports and international price relativities, to name only a few. One cannot rule out the successful discovery of relationships of this kind; but, equally, one cannot guarantee it. Friedrich Hayek is right to argue that scientific method can still be applied to predict certain general features of an interacting system even in the absence of specific numerical relationships. Such procedures are commonplace, for example, in biology and linguistics.[3]

One may, for example, assert with considerable confidence that the U.S.A. (or any other country) cannot have a balance-of-payments problem once the convertibility of its currency into gold or other international assets is suspended, and the authorities do not attempt to peg its rates in terms of any other national currency. But it may not be possible to predict—within a useful margin of accuracy—the numerical value of the exchange rates which will emerge between the dollar and other currencies once convertibility is suspended.

Unfortunately, macro-economic forecasts of this kind are frequently regarded, especially in Whitehall and in the Press, as the whole of economics. When predictions of this kind are rendered ludicrous by events (*e.g.* the "world dollar shortage" which turned into a glut; the supposed ability of sanctions to destroy the Rhodesian economy within "weeks rather than months"; or the unexpected runaway rise in unemployment in the winter of 1971–2), the cause of rational analysis of any kind receives a body-blow.

A MISTAKEN EMPHASIS of a different kind is the modern insistence that "positive" social science—which is supposed to have no policy implications—should be strictly separated from "value-judgments." The distinction was worth making to protect scholarly standards. But it has reached the point where it is doing more good than harm. It was David Hume himself who pointed out that no "ought" judgment can be logically inferred from an "is" statement. Unfortunately Hume's distinction is too frequently interpreted in an excessively wooden manner which would have been foreign to its inventor.

One danger of the embattled positivist approach is that it vastly overestimates the ease of distinguishing between the two kinds of statement in actual language. Most generalisations in the social sciences are a subtle blend of positive assertions and value-judgments. Assertions about *efficiency . . . cost . . . economic function . . . consumer wants . . . harmony . . . real income . . . economic welfare . . . demand for reserve currencies*, and even *unemployment* usually embody both value-judgments and generalisations about the world in a mixture that is very difficult to disentangle. All the above terms—of which "efficiency" is the most frequent—occur in "objective tests" administered to beginners in economics. (The results of trying out these same tests on professional economists, politicians, and commentators are described in a survey, *Is There an Economic Consensus?*[4]) It is unconvincing for orthodox economists to assert their scientific virginity when challenged by collectivist or radical critics on this point. They would do better to be less defensive, to accept that certain value-judgments are involved in their own doctrines, and to come out into the open in their defence.

IT IS TOO OFTEN SUPPOSED that because value-judgments cannot be scientifically established rational discussion of them is impossible. They are usually assumed to emanate mysteriously from governments, or populations, or the individual economist himself; and it is by injecting

[3] F. A. Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (1967), Chapters 1 and 2.

[4] Published by Macmillan as a companion volume to my *Capitalism and the Permissive Society*.

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such arbitrary judgments at some stage into their work that the analysis of "optimum positions" mentioned above is usually carried forward by economists who wish to maintain their scientific credentials.

The ultimate reason why we can argue fruitfully about many value-judgments has been given by Professor A. K. Sen in *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*.[5] Value-judgments can be divided into two types, "basic" and "non-basic." A basic judgment is one that applies in all conceivable circumstances. If circumstances can be envisaged where it would not apply, it is non-basic. Take the statement (a fanciful, but revealing, example of Sen's): "Men and women should be allowed to dress as they like." This may appear an ultra-liberal basic judgment. But if the person who utters it flinches when asked: "Even if it turned out that mini-skirts caused cancer in the eye of the beholder?", then it is non-basic. The fundamental point is that while it can sometimes be shown that a particular judgment is non-basic, there is no way of demonstrating that a judgment is basic. In Sen's words, "No one would have occasion to consider all conceivable factual circumstances and to decide whether in any of the cases he would change the judgment or not." Where we have not had to face a concrete choice, we may simply not know what our real values are.[6]

When I wrote a preface to my own book, I was too apologetic about the fact that I was unable to present a systematic treatise—moving inexorably from fundamental principles and established empirical regularities to detailed policy prescriptions. While more time (and ability) could have undoubtedly improved the final product, the basic approach of moving to and fro from principles to case studies is probably the best way of proceeding in these matters, and it is used implicitly even by writers who claim to be following other methods. The best that one can hope for from such studies are not rigid rules, but some conscious presumptions, guide-lines, and maxims which may be better than the unconscious ones that guide those who vainly suppose that they are "examining each issue on its merits."

The guide-lines most frequently on offer in current economic discussion derive from an unsatisfactory form of Utilitarianism. For despite all the talk about "positive economics" and disclaimers about "value-judgments", English-speaking economic writers have been largely influenced by the Utilitarian ethic. This has its roots in an eminently sensible desire to base public policy on the wants of flesh-and-blood human beings rather than on some mystical idea of the Good of the State or the advancement of some other-worldly set of values.

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE at least two main snags in the Utilitarian approach. The first is the difficulty of reconciling conflicts of interest between individuals. Most Utilitarians aim to maximise satisfaction per head and assume, for a variety of reasons, that each individual is to count for one. But despite its egalitarian façade, a straightforward Utilitarianism could well endorse the despoliation, or oppression, of a minority, if this would lead to large enough gains for the majority.

A policy of maximising satisfactions can lead to other extremely cruel and paradoxical results. The question of whether to satisfy the desires of those who enjoy the torture and suffering of other human beings is only the most obvious and extreme case. If an increase in the prosperity of some people is likely to make a sufficient number of envious souls feel subjectively worse off, then the pure Utilitarian would wish to stop it. (Indeed these feelings of rancour have been dignified in the economic literature with the label of "interdependence effects.")

Moreover, to a consistent Utilitarian, anything that increases wants—and therefore the proportion of wants liable to be unsatisfied at any one time—is anathema. A spontaneous change of tastes or fashion is to be regretted; and any biochemical or psychological method for reducing wants is *prima facie* to be welcomed. Not only is advertising a harmful promoter of wants, but so is the dissemination of any philosophical system, political creed, or artistic undertaking that causes people to be distrustful of their lot or to want more (or different) things.

By inserting sufficient qualifications, provisos, and exceptions, it is possible to remove these objections and prevent Utilitarianism from becoming the enemy of freedom. But patched up in this way, it begins to look like the Ptolemaic system, which was just workable with the aid of a host of complicated subsidiary hypotheses on the eve of the Copernican revolution.

THE REVIVAL in the recent literature of political and economic philosophy of modern versions of the old "Social Contract" doctrine holds out some promise of an alternative to such a patched-up Utilitarianism. The most recent, and important, is John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*,[7]

Continued on page 61

[5] Oliver & Boyd (1970), Chapter 5.

[6] This is forcefully and convincingly argued by Braybrooke and Lindblom in *A Strategy of Decision*, (1963).

[7] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford and Harvard University Presses, 1972).

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I WISH TO TAKE the opportunity of setting out my views on the political situation following last week's by-elections. There has been a lot of talk about the formation of a new centre party. Some have even been kind enough to suggest that I might lead it. I find this idea profoundly unattractive. I do so for at least four reasons.

FIRST, *I do not believe that such a grouping would have any coherent philosophical base. The idea that my views are closer to the campaign attitude of the Liberal candidate in Chester-le-Street than to those of Mr Giles Radice is manifest nonsense. Nor have they anything in common with the Scottish Nationalist in Dundee. A party based on such a rag-bag could stand for nothing positive. It would exploit grievances and fall apart when it sought to remedy them. I believe in exactly the reverse sort of politics. It is the duty of leaders to seek to synthesize and give reality to people's aspirations, not to separate and exploit their conflicting grudges.*

Second, I believe that the most likely effect of such an ill-considered grouping would be to destroy the prospect of an effective alternative government to the Conservatives. Some of those who advocate such a course may find such an outcome perfectly tolerable. I do not. They must not be surprised if those of us who have a firm commitment to radical change receive their advice a little cynically. But that by no means applies to all such advocates. Some genuinely want a new, powerful anti-Conservative force. They would be wise to reflect that it is much easier to will this than to bring it about. The most likely result would be chaos on the left and several decades of Conservative hegemony almost as dismal and damaging as in the twenties and thirties.

Third, I do not share the desire, at the root of much such thinking, to push what may roughly be called the leftward half of the Labour Party, and their supporters in the country, out of the mainstream of British politics. The country today suffers from too much alienation and confrontation. Such a development, if successful, could only fortify this. It would be designed to remove from a large and significant section of the nation both the discipline and the benefits of participation in a governing party. It would increase and not diminish the divisions in our society.

Fourth, and more personally, I cannot be indifferent to the political traditions in which I was brought up and in which I have lived my political life. Politics are not to me a religion, but the Labour Party is and always has been an instinctive part of my life. The most moving speech I ever heard was Hugh Gaitskell saying he would "fight, fight and fight again to save the party we love". That was the right message in 1960, and I believe it is still the right message today. I therefore have no desire to seek new combinations. I remember an old piece of doggerel about someone:

"Playing on his fuddled fiddle
Somewhere in the muddled middle."

I have no fuddled fiddle, and I do not propose to get one.

BUT I BELIEVE *there is a lot of fighting to be done. Anyone who is complacent about the state and prospects of the Labour Party today—or for that matter the Conservative Party, but that is not our problem—is just shouting in the dark. Given the record of the Government we ought to be in a dominating position, infused by self-confident enthusiasm. Instead we got an average of 38 per cent of the poll in three seats which have been unvaryingly Labour since 1945. Leave out Lincoln, and our share still fell from 60 per cent at the 1970 general election to 43 per cent today. Nor were there many workers from within the constituencies. There was little spontaneous grass roots enthusiasm. There is something very wrong indeed with an opposition party which in mid-term and in the winter of the Government's discontent cannot do better than this.*

The position can and must be drastically improved. I do not believe there will be a general election for 18 months. We are lucky that our weakness is fully matched by that of the Conservative Party. During this time the Labour Party can recover, but only if it learns some lessons from the slide to weakness of the past two years.

The search for scapegoats in the last two weeks has been ludicrous and depressing. It is even said by those who have had almost undisputed control of the party during its decline that it is all the fault of those of us who have throughout wanted a different, more responsible, more consistent approach. This is standing sense on its head.

THEN IT IS ALL THE FAULT *of the press. Of course the press has its faults, but that is something with*

THIS TEXT by ROY JENKINS M.P., former deputy leader of the British Labour Party, Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Harold Wilson Government (1964–1970), is perhaps the most effective short speech made by a socialist politician in many years. It was delivered in March to students of Oxford University; and it continues our documentation of "The Prospects of Socialism" begun with Professor Richard Lowenthal's article (ENCOUNTER, January). On the following two pages we publish a report on the German Social Democracy.—ED. NOTE.

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which we have to live. And merely to whine about it is a recipe for self-pity and defeat. If the Labour Party handles itself well it can bring some of the press along with it and laugh at the rest. Roosevelt won election after election with a far more hostile balance of newspapers against him than anything we have in this country.

Then there is the worst excuse of all, the belief that the electorate owes the Labour Party support and that if they do not give it, even when they are deeply disillusioned with the Tories, it is they and not we who are perversely at fault. The electorate is entitled to do what it likes, and it is our duty to earn support. It is also our duty to try to represent the whole of the leftward thinking half of the country and to provide an acceptable alternative government. If we become so narrowly based as to fail in that we are perpetuating the power of Toryism and neglecting our democratic duty. Those who shut their eyes to this, scream "betrayal" and "conspiracy" whenever anything happens which they do not like, and believe they can just bulldoze the voters back into support are making the Gadarene swine look like a group of far-sighted animals.

WHY IS THERE *such widespread public disillusionment with both the major parties? I believe there are three main reasons.*

First, people dislike the conventional slanging matches of politics, and turn away in boredom when they listen to hyperbolic denunciations of the other side for doing what they have a shrewd suspicion the denouncing party would itself be doing if it were in office.

Second, they are deeply cynical about easily made promises which they believe will never be carried out.

Third, they feel that a different language is talked and different standards are applied in politics from those which are regarded as reasonable in ordinary life. For most people politics are only a small part of their lives. Much of the time they are more interested in their families, their gardens, their football clubs—and not a bad thing either. Their standards are made in these activities. If they then see a private world of politics in which things are done quite differently they react with distaste and detachment. If they believe that politics make puppets of us all, this only increases the gap between people and the machines.

FROM THESE REFLECTIONS *I draw another set of three rules which the Labour Party ought to apply in its policy-making and presentation.*

First, is the measure proposed necessary and desirable to create a better society and to serve the interests of the broad range of people we represent?

Second, if included in the programme, is there a good chance that it can be carried out and made to work effectively, bearing in mind both our practical experience in the past as well as our aspirations for the future?

Third, is what we are proposing likely to win, rather than alienate support for the Labour Party, and thus give us the opportunity to do anything at all, as opposed to expatiating in impotence?

IT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE *to meet all three tests. There may be times when the first and third tests conflict, as may indeed be the case with our commitment, which must be absolute, to racial equality. Where this is so the first test must take first priority. We should certainly not merely search for issues on which to gain easy popularity; there has already been too much of this on all sides of politics in recent years.*

But any policy proposed ought to be relentlessly scrutinized to meet at least two of the tests, and most ought to meet all three. All too often none of the three are given any serious consideration. It is regarded as more important to solve internal party problems and pay off old scores. It is no accident that this has led to the worst electoral showing by an opposition in the postwar history of British politics.

THERE IS IN ADDITION *a fundamental point on which we must be clear. Are we offering people the prospect of steady progress towards better living, a fairer distribution and a more idealistic society? Or are we seeking salvation through catastrophe? Do we seek improvement or smash? We can hardly convincingly do both at the same time. The number of people who are prepared to put the country through the needless misery of complete national failure are a tiny minority. They sometimes have an influence disproportionate to their numbers. Unless we make it clear that this catastrophic view in no way affects our policymaking we might as well say goodbye to power for a generation.*

Furthermore, if chaos did come and threaten our democratic institutions I have little doubt that it would be the far right rather than the left who would be the beneficiaries.

Some may not mind. I do, and so I believe do a great majority of the Labour Party members and supporters throughout the country. They want a party with plenty of radical cutting edge but they want it to have responsibility and consistency and to mean what it says. It is time we started talking sense to the British people.

Roy Jenkins

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Munich

IS the SPD breaking up? Recent political events in Munich, so often a precursor of nation-wide developments, lend relevance to a question which has gravely concerned the party leadership for a considerable time. Outside the SPD, speculation occasionally extends to whether the entire West German Federal Republic will soon "go socialist" and turn into a State ruled by frigid functionaries—to whether "the end of freedom is nigh" and the threat of bleak equality imminent. Answers to these questions vary between blithe optimism (the lively discussions were very "encouraging" and all will turn out well) and resigned pessimism (about the dreaded disintegration of a great democratic party). The Social Democracy is indeed passing through an extremely crucial phase.

The whole process may be viewed, if you wish, with great detachment. Ideological battles on the Left are older than the Communist Manifesto, itself covered in the polemical dust of 135 years. Revolution or reform, total change or revisionism, a cadre or a popular party, abolition or improvement of the system, a planned or a market economy—running battles over these alternatives are an historic characteristic of all left-wing movements. These arguments have always been waged in great and, in extreme cases, deadly earnest, hence the continual schisms, alliances, defections on both flanks, party inquisitions and excommunications. Only the history of the Church is as rich in similar phenomena. Meanwhile, no clearer light has been shed on the authentic essence of true "socialism." Despite this quasi-reassuring historical experience, however, detached calm refuses to descend on any German observer of the party battle now in progress. Though not precisely definable, the term "socialism" has retained its capacity to provoke impassioned argument. Why?

ONE THING CANNOT in this context, be ignored—the charge that wherever Marxist doctrine has assumed power in Europe the result has been less rather than more freedom, or justice or prosperity; that it has in our own times meant inhumanity and frightful excesses. The socialist Left, which tends these days to be upset by such assertions, retorts polemically that they foment "anti-communism"—as though it were a disgrace to the humanist spirit to condemn the inhumanities of a Communist dictatorship.

To be fair, however, the SPD's neo-Marxist ideologists cannot be accused of sympathising with the authoritarian Communism that prevails in Eastern Europe. Their theoretical lines of demarcation are in some ways becoming clearer. They are learning to make restrictions and qualifications—even to the classical thesis that the Federal Republic is "a State devoted exclusively to the service of capitalist interests." A measure of theoretical clarification is undoubtedly under way. This seems to have shaken the ideological confidence of a few of the faithful and driven them back into their anchorite's cell ("giving Bible classes with readings from Marx" is how one Munich Young Socialist intellectual recently described the process). Others, by contrast, are acquiring an even firmer grasp of the indispensable rules governing a free constitutional State (separation of powers, representative democracy with changes of majority, freedom of speech, judicial independence. . . .)

HOWEVER TRUE THIS MAY BE, *and whatever hopes it may kindle among genuine reformers at the top of the party, an impression of great disunity persists. Fluidity still characterises the border-line between a liberal social democracy (whose orientation is essentially towards a free economy) and a radical socialism, which aspires to the total transformation of society. This is attested by innumerable "papers", resolutions, campaigns and party slogans. One has only to observe the ceaseless attacks on the party leaders' recent decisions or on the Ministerpräsident's regional edict about the non-employment of radicals in the civil service (it had Chancellor Brandt's backing). The fervour of such outcries can scarcely be ascribed to concern for constitutional government or even to certain tactical calculations in respect of the DKP, the fringe Communist party. It seems rather to be wounded ideological affinities that are impelling the party's left-wingers to protest. They thus suggest—and sometimes openly state—that basically the Communist, with his Marxist convictions, is a closer political neighbour than the CDU-voter or even the right-wing Social Democrat. The result is a peculiar form of "solidarity" among socialists which is quite different from the flexible fraternity found among libertarian democrats. This is the shadowy no-man's-land in which schism can thrive. On the eve of the Hanover SPD conference some* 30 *"Jusos", the so-called Eckert-Gruppe of militant Young Marxists, resigned from the SPD and announced themselves as new members of the Communist Party. Here, they explained, they would find a more congenial ideological atmosphere for their theory of STAMOKAP. (This up-to-date theory is based on the breathtaking thesis, possibly derived from a reading of dog-eared Gotha pamphlets of* 1894, *that the liberal-democratic State is only—basically, fundamentally, in essence, in the last analysis—the instrument of Monopoly-Capitalism.)*

The schismatic crisis will probably become still

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Letter from Germany

more virulent, if only because so many terms employed in socialist social analysis—first and foremost the term "socialism" itself—sound the same but can have fundamentally different meanings.

NOTHING COULD BE MORE NATURAL **than the wish of young people to know where they are going. Nor is it fair to censure them for wanting to discern a deeper meaning in every-day "Pragmatismus" and a morally rewarding objective on the horizon. The thing that should, however, be firmly condemned is a vulgar dogmatism which neglects to re-examine its own foundations—which forces the whole of present European reality and the whole complexity of future world developments into the crudest possible mould. Grim resignation overcame Marx in later life when he saw what had become of his ideas: "Moi, je ne suis pas Marxiste. . . ." How right he was not to want to have anything to do with so many brands of so-called Marxists.**

SPD LEADERS *will have no choice but to define their essential positions clearly. Their task in the fierce debates before and during the party's spring conference at Hanover will be to make it plainer than ever that, while determined to pursue their ideas of a "better life", they will be submitting all vague ideals to the strictest considerations of realism and humanity. They will not be able to escape saying what it is that they mean by "socialism." More money for social services? More "unalienated" freedom or social mobility? Bigger job opportunities for more people? Stability and security? Law and order (whose and for what)? The transference of the means of production (which?) to public ownership (whose?). They will have to present their younger followers with a social balance sheet, but not couched in financial or budgetary terms alone. Instead, they will have to say whether, where and how so-called "democratisation" is extending the range of human opportunity, or diminishing and encroaching on it. They will have to say whether they favour "Mitbestimmung" or co-determination (by factory workers, or by trade unions, or by public corporations) whether it is to be "participation" or class struggle, whether one wants a broad-based capital growth or a straight across-the-board rise in income. . . .*

THE AMBITIOUS PROPOSAL **of the German Left is to attempt a "new analysis" of the actual status of those who live in our Industrial Society. This is evidently what the younger socialist element wants. But any such analysis must be free from the preconceived and emotive battle-slogans of the New Left whose members invariably proclaim what "ought to be", never what is. Once an idea becomes divorced from reality, both are impaired.**

Hans Heigert

from which one can profit without sharing his egalitarian social philosophy. His most interesting concept is the "veil of ignorance." The idea is to work out the principles on which "free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests" would desire their community to be run if they did not know their own social or economic place, the market value of their own talents, and many other key features of their real situation. A wealthy man might like to establish principles which minimise taxes for welfare purposes; a poor man might espouse principles of an opposite kind. If one excludes knowledge of one's own actual situation, there is some chance of working out the principles of a just society on a disinterested basis.

The "veil of ignorance" is indeed a useful device for securing disinterested discussion and *narrowing* the range of disagreement, despite difficulties in securing the degree of imaginativeness and candour required. But Rawls goes too far in asserting that with its aid unanimous agreement on the principles of a just social order should be possible.

One of the principles he derives is that all "social primary goods"—such as liberty and opportunity, income and wealth—"are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured." This assumes that under the veil of ignorance we are all going to base decisions on the fear that we are going to be in the category of the "most disadvantaged representative person." The assumption is highly doubtful. People's attitudes towards risk and uncertainty differ a great deal. If one tries to widen the veil of ignorance, as Rawls does, to exclude knowledge of all such differences (among them a person's tastes, beliefs, or the century in which he is to live) we are left with an abstraction devoid of recognisably human characteristics.

It would be much more fruitful to treat the political and economic order that would be favoured under the veil of ignorance as an empirical question, indeed a question to which some of the methods of experimental psychology might be carefully applied, and to which different people would give different answers. One might hazard the guess that if they were ignorant of their own position in the income distribution, most people would be concerned to "level up" at the bottom so that there was no longer a depressed minority to which they might be consigned. But attitudes would still differ a great deal towards the number and height of the summits at the upper end of the income distribution.

The use of the veil of ignorance and the "contract" approach in narrowing the range of

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argument about inequality is brought out by the following example.

Income of:	1st Distribution	2nd Distribution
Jones	32	31
Smith	18	10
Brown	1	10
Total	51	51

If Jones, Smith and Brown are identifiable individuals constituting an electorate, and if voting is based on self-interest, Jones and Smith will vote for the first distribution, which will prevail, and Brown will suffer great deprivation. If, on the other hand, each elector had no idea what his own position was to be, his overriding concern would almost certainly be to avoid being in the position of Brown in the first distribution; and it is highly probable that the second distribution, under which everyone would be guaranteed at least 10 income units, would secure unanimous approval.

Another interesting aspect of John Rawls's work is that it does provide arguments for (and not just assertions of) the importance of personal freedom in an affluent Western society. As material standards of living rise, the importance of further additions to them decreases in comparison to that of gains in freedom. Or to put the same point another way: the importance of liberty increases as material obstacles to its exercise diminish. Liberty may have the same meaning for an American student as for an Egyptian peasant, but it is—rightly—valued more highly by the former.

Such arguments do not amount to a proof of the "priority of liberty" which could satisfy those of deeply-held paternalist convictions. But they do make it easier to understand and sympathise with the determination shown by so many people, especially among the young, to be free from restraints in the field of personal conduct laid down by tradition and authority.

This is important in relation to the market economy. For the fundamental justification of the latter is in terms of freedom, rather than growth of GNP. Indeed the arguments for a sensibly-run market-economy are fundamentally those for allowing people to "do their own thing." It is no accident that an author of the Chicago free-market school once managed to write a pamphlet in a flamboyant style sprinkled with four-letter words, which gave the impression of being somewhere on the anarchist wing of the New Left.

The reason why this affinity is not generally realised is that most of the apostles of the "Alternative Society" and the more libertarian wing of the New Left believe that we do not have to choose between a command system ruled by political decisions or a market-economy, or some mixture of the two; but that there exists some totally different third alternative. If this myth could be exploded and the need for some system of information, co-ordination, and incentives realised, the advantages of the *right sort* of market economy would stand out for genuine libertarians.

Much of today's political discussion takes the form of the Left asking for more and more "democracy", with more and more posts in business, schools and elsewhere either being elected or subject to shop-floor veto. The Right tends to reply with a rear-guard defence of authority and obedience. Neither side points out that the best way of controlling one's own destiny—to be free of the unreasonable dictates of both one's colleagues and one's boss—is the power to "vote with one's feet" and to go elsewhere.

Reformers and radicals often fail to realise how many of their objectives can be achieved by working through rather than against market forces. If airlines, radio, and television stations, and North Sea oil and gas operators had to bid competitively for their licences, their opportunity to make monopoly profits would vanish, as would the power of the "Establishment" to confer privileges on those it favours. The auctioning by public authorities of development permits, or land value taxation, would be the right way of extracting the windfall gains from the scarcity of urban space—and would be far better than control of land and property prices, which would only create shortages and flourishing black markets.

It is not always appreciated how much interventionist policies help the better-off, often in proportion to their means. The most outstanding example consists of the numerous fiscal privileges granted to those who own rather than rent their own homes. If these were abolished, the case for moving towards market rents and concentrating subsidies on "people" rather than "buildings" would be impregnable. A less obvious example consists of student grants. These achieve the double feat of being a redistribution towards the better-off over a lifetime's earnings and depressing a student's living standards during his university years compared with his working contemporaries. A shift to a loan system would reverse both effects.

There are numerous other examples of the

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possible use of market forces on the side of enlightenment. Regional payroll taxes and subsidies can influence the distribution of employment without the whole apparatus of controls or selective bribes to favoured firms. The skilful use of motor taxation to reflect true social costs would be a much better way of coping with the social effects of the car then anything suggested by the *"Ban Them!"* brigade. Help for the poor by means of the social security system would be much more effective than the present crude attempts to push up the wages of the lower paid, which is almost certain to lead to higher unemployment.

What many of these examples have in common is that individuals and organisations make their own decisions—and public policy is pursued by known rules with a minimum of discretionary action by politicians and officials (with all the possibilities of favouritism and corruption to which such discretion gives rise).

THE CASE FOR MARKET FORCES depends on markets being reasonably competitive. This is not so in the labour market, which is dominated by trade union monopolies. Economic liberals have always recognised that where monopolies cannot be abolished, they may have to be controlled. This, by itself, need not interfere with the operation of market forces in the rest of the economy—including the many fringe labour markets where the writ of the union system does not run. The trouble with the current Incomes Policy in Britain is that the Government has sucked up to the prejudices of the ignorant by accompanying a very necessary regulation of trade-union monopoly power with an absurdly detailed system of price control—even though there is no suggestion of monopoly for the vast majority of firms concerned, and profit margins have been on a falling trend for many years.

These follies make it all the more important to stress the defects of fashionable Interventionism. Rulers since Diocletian have discovered that you do not stop prices from rising by telling them not to—and not even if the death penalty is threatened. On this particular matter time is on the liberal's side. A façade of price controls may remain as a concession to public prejudice: but if ludicrous distortions and inefficiencies are to be avoided, the controllers will in the long run permit prices to move in a very similar way to what they would have done in any case.

THE MAIN DIFFICULTY about stating the case for a properly-run market economy has nothing to do with the ephemeral political developments of the last couple of years. It is the one stated very clearly by the Whig legal

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philosopher A. V. Dicey 70 years ago.[8] It will be clear even from the very brief examples of the last few paragraphs that a properly-run market economy is a subtle concept, full of what Dicey called "modifications or qualifications" of the earlier presumption in favour of *laissez-faire*. Yet as Dicey observed, the introduction of such complications "into the doctrines of political economy inevitably deprives the doctrines of much of their popular authority . . . [The] breadth and indefiniteness of an eclecticism which attempts to combine in one whole the half-truths to be found in different systems cannot excite enthusiasms or stimulate men to action."

The best answer to Dicey's dilemma is to carry the battle into the other camp. Thanks partly to some recent analytical work that has been done, mostly in the U.S., on the structure of political incentives and deterrents inside a modern democracy, it is possible to come out with some presumptions—not in favour of *laissez-faire*, but about the limitations of the political process.

This new school of investigation—known by the label of "public choice" theory—starts off by pointing out that mainstream writing on economic policy implicitly assumes that governments are run by benevolent despots. The public-choice theorists have pointed to the absurdity of analysing market behaviour on the assumption that individuals are guided by self-interest, while assuming that the same individuals become Platonic Guardians if given political or public office. The same assumptions should surely be applied to the same individuals in either situation.

One of the most striking and least controversial results of these studies—and a major obstacle to trendy ideas about referenda and "participation"—is the lack of incentive for the ordinary citizen to become even moderately well-informed on major issues. Anthony Downs demonstrated in his *Economic Theory of Democracy*[9] that there was no good reason of self-interest even to vote, so small are an individual person's chances of influencing the outcome. Public spirit may get him as far as the polling booth, but hardly as far as a thorough study of issues. The short cuts adopted, *e.g.* class identification, going by the television persona of the rival leaders, or ideological stereotypes, are rational ones for voters for whom it would not be worthwhile to acquire the immense amount of knowledge to decide on any other basis. This is in strong contrast to purchases in the market, where the choice made has a direct personal impact, and there is an immediate and tangible incentive to acquire information.

The irrationality (if not impossibility) of behaving like the Model Citizen of democratic theory applies even to the minority of active political participants. The cost and difficulty of acquiring a worthwhile opinion, and the small probability of his own view being decisive, make it irrational for an M.P. to study in depth more than at most a very small number of issues in which he is actively involved. In all the rest it is perfectly reasonable for him to cut a few corners—for example by seeing who else is taking a particular view, or following his own faction within his party.

In people's own personal lives, the cash constraint is an influence for rationality. They know that more of one thing means less of something else. They know they can improve the trade-offs, *e.g.* between leisure and take-home pay by a careful choice of where to live; but they know that improvements are not unlimited and themselves cost effort to find. By contrast the constraint of national resources is too abstract and remote for the same person to take on board as a voter. The Opposition politician has no interest in explaining it, while the incumbents must at least compete on promises of future performance. There is thus an endemic tendency to overestimate what Governments can achieve.

A further set of complications arises from the incentives within the bureaucratic process. The chain which links voters' preferences with the behaviour of the individual official is long, and it has many weak links. On the other hand, close connections inevitably develop between the regulating agency and those whom it is supposed to regulate—whether it is the Department of Education and the teachers, or the Bank of England and the City.

Even if voters' views were well-considered and could be translated into action with perfect efficiency by the government machine, there would be a prior difficulty in defining what we mean by the "majority view." This is an ambiguous concept if there are more than two alternative policies. It is well known that the decision a committee takes can depend on the accident of the order in which amendments are taken. The best chance of securing a clear-cut result would be to have a series of votes on all possible alternatives considered in pairs. Even then a cyclical result—*B* is preferred to *A*, *C* is preferred to *B*, but *A* is preferred to *C*—cannot be ruled out. It is in fact quite likely on issues involving many voters and a variety of possible action.[10]

[8] A. V. Dicey, *Law and Public Opinion in England in the 19th Century* (second edition, with 1914 Introduction, reprinted by Macmillan, 1963).

[9] Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Harper & Row, 1957).

[10] A comprehensible summary of these aspects of voting theory can be found in Appendix 2 of Buchanan and Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent* (Ann Arbor, 1965).

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These difficulties are greatly compounded by the complex policy bundles between which voters are supposed to choose at elections. But, as we have seen, they do no such thing.

EVEN IF WE COULD ATTACH a simple meaning to a "majority view", we would be up against a much more fundamental drawback. This is that unrestricted democratic rule allows a bare majority to impose costs on a minority which the latter has no means of escaping—as was demonstrated in the simple example on page 62. An altogether bogus sanctity has been given in modern politics to the desirability of a 51% majority prevailing over a 49% minority. In fact the only thing that can oe said in its favour is that, *other things being equal*, it is less bad than 49% prevailing over 51%. But these need not be the only available options. It may be possible to modify a proposal so that the minority opposition is less intense in quantity and quality. Or it may be possible to take a decision entirely (or partly) out of the political sphere by returning it to the individual consumer in the market place.

TWO ALTERNATIVE TYPES of potential oppression emerge from an analysis of the democratic process. One, just mentioned, is the oppression of the minority by a majority. The other is the oppression of the majority by a coalition of minorities. The two types can co-exist at the same time on different issues.

Coalitions of minorities are likely to emerge where there are concentrated producer or geographical interests. Citizens' interests as producers are highly concentrated in particular areas, while their interest as consumers are dispersed thinly over a vast range of activities. This accounts for the well-known bias of democracy towards the politics of the "pork-barrel."

Let us, however, assume that all producers are also consumers and that the network of lame-duck subsidies, prestige projects, state intervention to "save" specific jobs (and so on) receive not majority, but unanimous, approval. In what sense can the liberal economist object? Does this not merely mean that people value their quiet life as producers more than the extension of their choice as consumers or the benefits of faster growth? The liberal has no business to impose a long-run view on those who prefer to take a shorter one.

But do they really prefer to take a shorter view? It could well be that many people, if they had the necessary information, and opportunity, would be prepared to phase out their particular interest group privileges as part of a bargain in which a sufficient number of others did the same thing, and all gained something. Unfortunately, such a bargain is quite unfeasible because of the extremely high costs of information, decision, and organisation involved. One has only to try to imagine the Miners, the Farmers, the beneficiaries of Rent Control, *Concorde* workers *et al.* attempting to bargain away their privileges and secure copper-bottom guarantees that all the other interest-groups would keep their word. These difficulties are aggravated by the fact that the professional leaders of producer groups have a personal interest in securing a compromise based on an exchange of privileges (rather than in bargains to abandon them, which would reduce their own role and perhaps even eliminate their jobs).

THE MORAL THAT CAN BE DRAWN from the foregoing is that the discovery of shortcomings in the market place does not automatically set up a presumption in favour of political intervention. The shortcomings of the political process, as well as the market place, in satisfying and reconciling the desires of citizens must be taken into account in any particular decision. Moreover, as we have seen, modern democracy not merely falls short of some ideal. It also tends to develop explosive potentialities, as deferential habits and constitutional checks are set aside, and expectations increase with little regard to feasibility or consistency. The real case for some form of market economy is not that it establishes "optimum" conditions, but that it reduces the number of decisions that have to be taken and imposed on the losers by the coercive organs of state after a political struggle.

THE DESIRE OF MANY PEOPLE for "a greater say" in determining their own lives is a healthy one. It is fashionable to believe that this can be achieved by "participation" or by "workers' control" or by bodies of professional consumers or a widespread extension of government controls—all methods of increasing the area of our lives determined by *political* forces, which their sponsors euphemistically call "social." When the threadbare nature of these devices has been revealed by experience, the case for the market as an instrument of individual choice will again receive a hearing. The turning point may be nearer than the headlines suggest.

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Digressions from Larkin's 20th-Century Verse

By Robert Lowell

THE OXFORD'S unaltered naval blue and gold, Philip Larkin's *Twentieth Century,* begins with a single love-sonnet by Blunt followed by twenty-five pages of Hardy. Blunt in his lonely sentry-box gives a scale for the many Hardys. From here on, or quite far, the pace and quality of the selection are set.[1] A scattering of lesser poets, longer but undisturbing choices from Bridges and Housman, then a jolt: Kipling and Yeats side by side, with about the same number of pages—20. In his own *Oxford Modern,* Yeats placed himself more brilliantly. Here, equal to Kipling and a little less than Hardy, he is seen through the wrong glasses, and dull. Quiller-Couch also liked minor poets and crowded his anthologies with discoveries. Many never caught on, and now give a sad strangeness to the familiar old volumes. When John Hayward re-edits the *Oxford 19th,* he scrapes off this mud, gets his values better, and leaves a bareness without eccentricity, the shellac of orthodoxy. Larkin makes many new choices, even rediscovering some of Quiller-Couch's. How much longer the 20th century has grown since Yeats died, how much more good poetry, and how much wearier the accumulation!

When I was a student, our anthologies backed a dozen American revolutions, and had the clarity of posters. Reckless with omissions and careless with dates, they often began with Walt Whitman, our best and the wind of the great dream let loose. His audience was small and hectic, lovers of inspiration more than letters, but his spirit was faith . . . democracy no skeleton to bury. Yet Emily Dickinson was an unmarried New England provincial and recluse, polite, without politics, with an intensity that exhausted. She found language, her nervous sentences made the professionals' good poetry sound like translation. No Whitman, but her admirers usually admired him—unless, as often happened, critical dogmas prevented. The waters went over their heads, but they were too much for the flow. Stephen Crane with his free verse puzzles was a modernist; Frost and Robinson formalists, losers come home from the desert—a rusticity that saved gentility. Nothing could ever be as American, good or bad, as the Chicago school of Lindsay, Sandburg and Masters, anti-capitalists, populists, wasters of words, inspired by accident, craftsmen with luck.

Pound, Eliot, Marianne Moore, Williams, Hart Crane, etc., wrote far from the common, and in styles close to the difficulties of art and the mind's unreason. For a long time, this vexed and bewildered even the small avant-garde public for poetry. But the meat was sweeter because the nut was hard to crack. This new poetry, reactionary, traditional or Parnassian, had the impact of an explosion, the outrage of Vandals. To a sour foreign eye, most American literature is a sequence of demolitions, the bravado of perpetual revolution, breakthrough as the stereotype with nothing preserved. Donald Davie in his brilliant, irritating and Promethean study of Hardy[2] calls Larkin the centrally representative English figure, the one least likely to be recognised by American Englishmen wishing to discover America. (Our central figure is Robert Frost, the one an Englishman perhaps would be least likely to recognise while exploring America.) When I read Larkin first in 1956, he made other styles obsolete. He was an innovator who made the slightest possible decisive change. He made Auden personal and familiar. That great house and gallery lost the foreign faces, the soaring scenery, the new Christian philosophies—these and so much else—less scaffolding, a new slang and sadness, Larkin's gloomy cheer that warmed.

[1] *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse.* Selected by PHILIP LARKIN. Oxford University Press, £3.

[2] *Thomas Hardy and English Poetry.* By DONALD DAVIE. Routledge, £2.75.

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DAVIE RUNS with hare and hound—an Englishman teaching in California, trying to keep his Englishness, trying to make his voice, still English, carry discipline to the Thracians.

> American poetry has notably been on the side of those elements in American society that most deplore American chauvinism, that rejects the overweening presumption that sets out to set the world to rights. . . . Yet American poetry is itself very chauvinistic . . . reflects the imperious rapacity that created the banana republics.

This is a war-broadcast; we ourselves made the same extenuation for the good Germans. National or religious polemicists make few converts because their faith is too great. Davie becomes American while fighting, a good one. Can an English poet export his nationality like London Bridge? Is American poetry braggart? Can countries redesign their people like a new breed of cattle?

Henry Adams in 1862:

> English assertion, blunt, brutal, bluff. . . . The commonest phrase overheard at an English club or dinner table is that So-and-So *is quite mad.* It is no offence to So-and-So, it hardly distinguishes him from the others. . . . The American mind exasperates them as a buzz-saw might exasperate a pine forest.

America was the faster, slighter country then, or thought she was. The chairs have changed, the course of empire—are we the English? National characteristics outlast the national fortunes. Our rise to a world-power cannot be forced to prop our arts. Something large comes to us fleetingly and with an ambiguous terror—in a moment, the landscape is oversize; the Pacific touches China; in the red New England October, the blood of the Revolution, our gunnery Adams thought superior to British, poems long as novels . . . aping immensity.

The Americans' democratic faith is suddenly at bottom. One ought to be glad to lose this angel, devil, firebringer, Milton's rebel, the first American. Like the Europeans, we do our own cooking, and try to warm the coils with a forced smile. The West is humble, and has tasted too many uncertain futures. The United States, founded in part on abstractions, a declaration, a constitution, an emancipation, seems lumpish without its old drill of illusion and enthusiasm. We have lost faith and kept our possessions—the nervous system racing against hope, the hardening plumbing.

IN THE LARKIN ANTHOLOGY, the poets with the pages are Hardy, Kipling, Yeats, Graves, Lawrence, Owen, Ted Hughes, MacNeice, Dylan Thomas, Bunting and Sir John Squire. I feel here, and still more in the full contents, that the editor indulges a kindness for both his likes and his dislikes. I have a few kicks on omissions: Bridges' "Eros" and "Low Barometer", more from Lawrence's *Birds and Beasts*, MacDiarmid, David Jones, Housman, Graves' "To Juan" and more of his White Goddess poems written during and after the Second War; a different Empson and much more, the De la Mares Auden admires, F. R. Higgins' "Song of the Clatterbones," Hardy's "No Buyers," and "The Voice," Eliot's "Gerontion" or "Fragment of an Agon," more from Larkin. These are easy suggestions; it's easy to dirty the margins with post mortems. I found so many good new poems, I would be ashamed to count up and name them.

What is most surprising and controversial is the great number of poets. Davie has written that the health of a culture is proved by the health of its minor poets. In certain moods, when one is most open, major and minor seem fictitious, as if invented to solace ambition and simplify English courses. Yet quite good poetry is less poetic than almost anything. . . . I will never rudely pass over John Drinkwater, or the much subtler and finer John Meade Falkner, who lived so freshly by the church calendar, or the perhaps major Edgell Rickword who expresses (what Pound thought impossible) modern sensibility in Pope's couplet, or the bright sharp voice of Rosemary Tonks. The poets have Oxford's seal; which have the editor's? Larkin perhaps feared that giving his private whims and judgments the weight of Oxford would be tyrannical.

I BEGAN THIS REVIEW wanting to write about the English poets. Because of some obscure embarrassment, I haven't gotten around to it. I have lived here too long to teach the English English, too little to avoid vexations with immigration. The grandest of the poets is Yeats; by fifty he learned to inspire his best subjects, ageing, the Irish Revolution, and the Irish woman, Maude Gonne *sans merci*, patriot and enchantress. He could hardly miss now . . . one or two poems out of three. The shorter ("To Eva Gore Booth" or "News from the Delphic Oracle") are often as ingenious and warm as the great—there are scores of these, hammered gold of Byzantium and Olympian Irish talk. Graves is quick of mind and tricky as Loki, he too is Protestant Irish. By temperament, not discipleship, he is closer to Yeats than he might like—most in his druidic White Goddess, one spirit in many bodies, beautiful, merciless, Maude Gonne without country or revolution . . . the flare on his grey English metal. I see him holding out three apples or walnuts and jokingly asking insoluble fatal riddles. He is the

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love-poet, almost ageless, always ten years from the lines at Passchendaele—too much an officer to mellow. No one could imagine Auden as Irish. He writes, though, the same idiom as Graves, the English of Oxford and the Oxford Unabridged, words trailing generations of meanings. He too has the fascination, patience and skill to revise. His first and magical poems are Viking . . . a youth leader surveying a geological mangle of the Industrial Revolution. One theme and setting; yet I find it hard to sort out what Auden writes most. His many styles are renewed by new thoughts always in the browning shadow. He journeys through time and himself, not space, journeys with much moralising chat, then a sudden slow moment, the miraculous. Eliot's a sharply American genius, though he spent three-quarters of a lifetime in London. His poems are one book, the Progress and Salvation of Prufrock. He writes well, almost equally well, from beginning to end. *The Quartets* are the top for me, perhaps because I read them in college when they were coming out, and then met Eliot two or three years later. They make his other work different and better, each line in place and earned—finally, a mysterious relenting of his fate. He was one of the greatest poets. Dylan Thomas is denser, narrower, and more the true animal than Yeats, his favourite poet to declaim at the readings. He is more like Rimbaud, another adolescent writing about adolescence, one who was shrewdly aware, and cursed—radiance toughened by obscurity and obscenity. Empson's best poems, half a dozen or more, though intellectual are forthright. (One, "Let it Go," is in this anthology.) He enjoys metrical struggle to the point of torture. In more hampered poems, mighty lines which no one else could write are lost in strain. He is the poet of Lucifer . . . not at all in black magic style . . . of Lucifer crucified. Strange subject for the great anti-Christian critic and hater of Calvary, for Empson's honest curtness. I won't write on all the poets that stir me; Lawrence, MacNeice, Owen, Hughes.

THE ONE WHO most moves me to tears—when poetry can—is Housman. His iron quatrains are sometimes like tomb-inscriptions for the Athenian youths who died at Marathon. No worse really for being Edwardian—one feels Housman foresaw the Somme and the end of the British empire. For him anguish is an inspiration, not a guilty disease to be hidden; his love and loyalty beyond homosexual love. One must like Hardy more than Housman, or even Yeats—for thirty-five years, at least in American colleges, by far the greatest poet of the century. Things really grow brighter when the sun shines on them. Hardy might have been over seventy when he wrote his best poems—and hundreds of others. He had to be old to find natural inspiration in nostalgia, things changing, the days of his courtship, eternal then quickly gone, when love turned terrible and the marriage endured. In Hardy's long turn of the century, 1880 to 1920, the visible world changed disastrously; objects died like extinct species, like our lives never to be seen again. Hardy catches this as no one has done. In his elegy on the *Titanic* sunk by an iceberg, the great ship is like a jewelled lady, the dragon-mother Grendel dying with her hoarded gold. Most of the great poems are elegies on his first wife, or variant fictions. They are like the music then fashionable—so true they are—or like the period photographs, if a photograph had feeling.

Many of the strongest and quickest English poets, though not Hardy, show they were taught in the old world of Oxford, Cambridge and the public school—a common dialect, cool, resenting overwriting and commonplace, hard rhythms won from writing Greek and Latin. Thomas Gray was an early poet of this kind; I doubt we will read the last.

IN THE '50s, Larkin, contributing to a Movement manifesto, wrote that he didn't know why most poetry had to be written. This might be the crash of the new wave, its puritanism and purism. I didn't think, though, that he was just applauding the Movement, its low-voiced insularity and lack of pretence. No style or school could have given his words their poignant severity, the music of Herbert, afflicted, amused, clear accents stiffening colloquial informality. What is technique with nothing said? We cannot do metre or speak to God as Herbert did. Larkin, like some other moderns, is particularly good at finding words for the instants of action, a person in his instant of time and place, colours that come once only.

This anthology took six years; one might dread such leisure for industry. But it's a work of salvage, almost of beachcombing. All choice is a bias; here it seems softened by impartial tolerance and unhurried care. Judgment has an air of negligence. No lichened and vulnerable trees fall. The book is like a poem, a Larkin, not the best, but the longest to write. His touch shows in his fine choice of poems one never heard of, in the Hardy and Betjeman selections, which seem less selections than the lifework in essence. Anthologists sometimes seem to scissor the material unread from other anthologies. I am sure Larkin read what he picked, and in certain moods enjoyed something in everything. A sustained kindness may take more nerve than critical decision.

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A Fictional Society

By Frank Tuohy

A SMALL INCIDENT which is repeated from time to time in Japan: you are in a train or a bar, and a stranger sits down beside you. Courtesy and national tradition oblige him to attempt conversation. Sooner or later he will ask you where you come from. When you tell him you are English, he nods wisely and remarks: "Ah, a gentleman."

The mild irritation you feel at this stock response has several causes, one of them being that, once your origins have been established, your acquaintance's interest flags noticeably. All nationals are held to be representing their nations, and nations are placed in a hierarchy according to their economic success. Not surprisingly, we are pretty far down.

The foreigner in Japan is just as prone to stereotypes and stock responses. Apart from the difficulty of the language, there are other problems in developing a deeper insight. In his posthumous book, *Mirror, Sword and Jewel*,[1] Kurt Singer writes that "friendships, not only with foreigners, after being established, often on first contact, remain unchanged as they are, almost never gaining new ground, intensity, fullness, development." To a certain extent, therefore, one is always at a distance. Life becomes a spectator sport, and reading is a necessity in order to fill in the picture. But there are very few books written by foreigners which are more than superficial. *Mirror, Sword and Jewel* is something of a discovery.

Kurt Singer, a German-Jewish economist and a disciple of Keynes, taught in Japan during the 'thirties. He was expelled when the war came, went to Australia, where he was interned, and died in Greece. The fact that he was also a classical scholar, who can make a comparison between Augustus and the Meiji Emperor, gives his book, which is introduced by Richard Storry, a depth and perspective which is, I think, almost unique.

From books like Singer's, and from the increasing number of Japanese novels available in translation, the Japan-watcher hopes to find a clue to something ill-understood, an insight into a scene which left one feeling stupid or at a loss. Reading is only a short cut, of course. It appeals to the interested spectator who has been held back from committing himself more deeply by the feeling that Japanese civilisation is in some way a blind alley. From having lived in other countries, one can comprehend elements in Japanese life. But the contrary is not the case. The lesson for other countries in Japan's astonishing progress is, unfortunately, that there is no lesson. Japan isn't like anywhere else, neither in its arts nor its trade unions, its sexual life or its town-planning. In spite of the notorious borrowings, there is a foreignness, a uniqueness, about everything.

IT IS FORTUNATE that the two art forms in which the Japanese have recently excelled are the ones most accessible to the Westerner: the novel and the film. Since the Meiji Restoration, the conflict between traditional and foreign influences has revolutionised poetry and painting. But in spite of, or perhaps because of, Harry Guest's lively and disabused introduction to the Penguin *Post-War Japanese Poetry*[2], it is difficult to feel much individuality in the poems that he and his collaborators have translated. Free verse translations seem to belong in the sphere of International Art, like the paintings from different countries that turn up at Biennales. Perhaps the prose writer and the film maker have originality forced on them by the nature of their material. Concerning the novel, V. S. Naipaul has written:

> "The Japanese are possessed of a way of looking—that curious literalness which adds up to a detachment formidable enough to seem pointless. However odd, this derives from a hunger for the seen and is an expression of concern with men."

The nature of this concern can surprise us at times. In Ichikawa's documentary of the 1948 Olympics (at any rate in the uncut version shown in Tokyo) the camera lingered with formidable detachment over Africans and Europeans, over sweaty German shot-putters and Russian lady athletes at the climax of physical effort: the Olympic Stadium had turned into a sort of Serengeti Park. This curious literalness is reminiscent of that unmistakable stare on the faces of country children who have just seen their first foreigner: for an instant one has an objective vision of oneself in their eyes, the whole face

[1] *Mirror, Sword and Jewel.* By KURT SINGER. Croom Helm, £3.75.

[2] *Post-War Japanese Poetry.* Edited by HARRY and LYNN GUEST and KAJIMA SHŌZŌ. Penguin, 40p.

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Thomas Love Peacock

Felix Felton

Peacock, best remembered as the successful author of such satiric masterpieces as *Nightmare Abbey* and *Headlong Hall*, was also a close associate of the Shelleys, the Mills and Meredith. This full biography, incorporating much new material, gives an absorbing and vivid panorama of literary circles during the fifty years up to his death in 1866 as well as of his career at the East India Office.
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Albert Axelbank

The Japanese are the only people in the world who have experienced the horrors of nuclear war in their own flesh and their 'Peace Constitution' specifically outlaws the use of war. Despite this, Mr Axelbank contends, contemporary forces within Japan are combining to create a strong movement for revision of the constitution and the acquisition of nuclear weapons by a renewed military establishment. The conservative ruling party, dominated by the *zaibatsu* industrial élite, the growing 'Self-Defence Forces' and the traditional right wing are opposed only by a liberal press, a large but ineffectual left wing and the nuclear 'allergy' of the people. *£3.50*

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Charlotte Gower Chapman

Milocca is a Sicilian village in which Charlotte Gower lived and studied for eighteen months in 1928. From her experiences and an intimate acquaintance with its people and their customs, hierarchies, religion, folk-lore and gossip, she wrote a rare work—a truly scholarly but very charming study of a whole small world. *Milocca* was written in 1935 but lost shortly after. It was only rediscovered recently. *£3.75 Illustrated*

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jutting out as though deformed, red and slightly obscene, like the long-nosed masks used in traditional festivals.

When this is applied to fiction, it supplies a physical density, a quality that western novelists seem to have lost sight of. We surround ourselves with objects without visual interest, whereas in Japan there are still popular aesthetic standards, which are applied to such various things as food, lavatories, kimonos and goldfish, and are not dependent on mere fashion. With regard to people we are told it is rude to stare—and so are the Japanese, but it doesn't prevent them from being acutely observant. The characters in most of our novels are disembodied conversationalists, who may be described on their first appearance, but have no physical presence thereafter.

THE STRONGEST OUTSIDE influence on modern Japanese literature has been from France, and in his obituary essay on Mishima Yukio, Professor Donald Keene writes:

> Mishima once expressed the view that "surely there can be no foreign author as much to the Japanese taste as Mauriac." He explained this in terms of a Japanese fascination for details—the expression on a woman's face when, on the point of weeping, she holds back the tears; just how far back one can see in a woman's mouth when she smiles; the pattern the wrinkles make in her dress when a woman turns around. . . . American novels afford little pleasure of this nature and therefore have never had much appeal for the Japanese.

One of Mishima's lesser novels, *Thirst for Love*, was written under Mauriac's influence, but the resemblances are not striking. Possibly he misinterpreted the French writer's use of such detail. The woman's expression, when she holds back the tears, has a cause; she is not weeping for nothing. (Perhaps Western males, on such occasions, enquire what on earth the matter is now, whereas the Japanese do not.) For Mauriac, attractive women can be as perilous as unexploded bombs, and the evocation of their physical presence points to a whole moral system. For the Japanese writer, they are items of aesthetic appreciation, rather in the same category as those lists of Adorable Things, Frightening Things, and Things that make one Nervous, which Sei Shōnagon recorded in her *Pillow Book*, nearly a thousand years ago.

DONALD KEENE is one of the three or four best interpreters of Japanese civilisation to the Anglo-Saxon world, and *Landscapes and Portraits*[3] is a fascinating collection of articles,

[3] *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture*. By DONALD KEENE. Secker & Warburg, £4.

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written at both general and specialist levels, and covering a wide field. There are essays on two more novelists, Dazai Osamu and Tanizaki Junichiro, as well as that on Mishima. Unfortunately Professor Keene does not write about the more elusive Kawabata Yasunari, the Nobel Prize winner.

Though the novel has always existed in Japan, the boundaries between truth and fiction have been imprecise, and there is a strong confessional element in early modern fiction. Yoshida Kenichi, a leading interpreter of his country to foreigners, thinks that a misunderstanding of Rousseau, and of Flaubert and Zola, led to the hybrid known as the "I-novel." "The author puts down everything that has happened to him in the course of a day, or some period of his life", an activity which, as Mr Yoshida points out, is limited to juvenile writers in America and England ("What I did in the holidays" etc.). Tanizaki, Kawabata, Mishima are all in revolt against this debilitating form, but people still read their books for autobiographical evidence. And the absence of any ethical or political programme in their writing only emphasises this. (Mishima is perhaps an exception, but his pronouncements were made outside his novels.) To use Eliot's well-known description of Henry James, Japanese novelists tend to have minds unviolated by ideas.

Professor Keene quotes Tanizaki as saying: "I am basically uninterested in politics, and so I have concerned myself exclusively with the ways people live, eat and dress, the standards of feminine beauty, and the progress of recreational facilities." A meagre programme for one of the great writers of his time, but it did not limit his achievement, any more than did his rather odd sexual preferences (foot-fetishism *plus* coprophilia). Japanese culture seems to treat sexual deviation as a matter of taste rather than as a neurosis; it is without inhibiting effect artistically.

THAT THE "hunger for the seen" still persists is shown in the best stories in Penguin's *New Writing in Japan*,[4] edited by Mishima and Geoffrey Bownas. In Mishima's interesting if rather slapdash introduction, we are told of the first writer, Inagaki Taruho, that "he had a curious affinity for cubism and what appears to be a fatal fascination for biplane crashes" and that his story "Icarus" "has a poetic fatalism highly reminiscent of Baudelaire's 'L'Albatros'." A lot of wires seem to have got crossed here, for "Icarus" is a haunting surrealist fable about some flying objects, apparently seagulls, which

[4] *New Writing in Japan*. Edited by MISHIMA YUKIO and GEOFFREY BOWNAS. Penguin, 50p.

Thomas Hardy

Donald Davie argues for our consideration of Hardy as the most far-reaching influence in modern British poetry, even more than Yeats or Eliot or Pound. John Bayley writes in the *Guardian*: 'I found this book even more stimulating than Davie's deservedly famous study on *Purity of Diction in English Verse*, and that is saying a great deal . . . this is a fighting book crusading in favour of hard work and short views for poetry.' A novel by one of the most exciting poets now writing marks Routledge's return to the field of fiction. Peter Redgrove's **In the Country of the Skin** is a novel of mystical experience, of visions which are the truest and most central realities of our existence.

The New Criminology is an important new study which is concerned to bridge the gap between criminology and sociological theory. Professor Alvin Gouldner described it as 'perhaps the first truly comprehensive critique that we have ever had of the totality, of past and contemporary, of European and American, studies of "crime" and "deviance". If any single book can succeed in making "criminology" intellectually serious, as distinct from professionally respectable, then this study, remarkable for its combination of the analytical with the historical will do it'.

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turn out to be model aeroplanes made like Japanese kites. The narrator knocks one down, opens a small lid to find green seaweed and a bad smell and peeping out "a face of something rather like a mouse. Its tiny beady eyes flashed at me and made me feel quite frightened." Naturally the story is set in Crete, a Crete where people exchange polite bows; its diffident narrator and its descriptive exactness are essentially Japanese.

There are four or five other stories as good as this. My personal preference was for Yoshiyuki Junnosuke's "Sudden Shower", the story of a prostitute in the post-war era. Since similar standards of behaviour permeate a whole society, visiting a tart takes place inside a fixed social frame, which gives the portrait of the girl a marvellously clear definition. Sexual candour is contrasted with the perennial, snobbish fastidiousness about possessions. In the prostitute's bedroom, "everything had been tastefully chosen and the table on which they were rolling the dice was of red sandalwood; only the dice were not in keeping. But if the dice had been expensive, this might have heightened the forlorn atmosphere that surrounded the woman."

Such writing promotes confidence because, like the best Russian fiction, it is so very much the product of immediate circumstance. Life is lived close at hand, without privacy and with great physical intimacy; yet there are codes of behaviour which still keep even members of the same family psychologically at a distance. "Body language" is highly developed—so much so that, with the invisibility of the other party, telephone conversations soon cease to be dialogue and dissolve into inarticulate grunts. All this—and perhaps myopia as well—concentrates the attention on the immediate surroundings.

Even where the theme is larger, for example that "front line of the spirit" evoked in Mishima's story "Patriotism", what is given is the relentless inch by inch account of the army officer's ritual suicide. The climaxes of the story are physical ones. There is no argument, and no sense of purgation. For a Westerner, this produces pointlessness; for a Japanese, perhaps the sensation of something fulfilled. We could not inhabit such a fictional society for long. It provides, though, a marvellous contrast to the impalpable worlds of most of our recent novels.

Who Needs a Poetry Reviewer?

By Roy Fuller

MANY POETS who have published books over the last ten years have felt themselves imperilled by the existence of Ian Hamilton. It was said, with some justification, that his stringent views were put out not only under his own name in the *London Magazine* and the *Observer* but also under the cloak of anonymity in the *Times Literary Supplement* and in the personae of "Edward Pygge" and "Peter Marsh" in the little magazine edited by him, *the Review*. I for one welcomed his appearance on the poetry-reviewing scene, having great sympathy for his principles of literary judgment and (what in a way is of equal importance) the tart and often comic terms in which he disposes of the pretentious and the overestimated.

The latter business is what is usually more in question. Is there any need to be so devastating? Is there a gratuitous streak of cruelty, even envy or malice, in a critic who expresses himself so waspishly? Are there any Keatses who have been snuffed out by a Hamilton article? I came myself to modern poetry at the time of the founding of *New Verse*, whose editor, Geoffrey Grigson, was no less sharp in his condemnations than Hamilton; and *the Review* undoubtedly took up the torch that Grigson had relinquished over twenty years earlier. Grigson's manner possibly derived most from Wyndham Lewis: behind him, too, was the reputation-deflating side of *The Calendar of Modern Letters*. And farther back was Ezra Pound's struggle against the poeticism of the earlier part of the century.

More remote genealogy would be unprofitable, but of course it can be said that in every epoch poetry is under an obligation to war against the dunces as well as to create its fresh triumphs, and I think that many poets have always felt (possibly, in the last analysis, erroneously) that the latter depended in some way on the former. Some poets, admittedly, have happily got on with the creative process aside from the polemics of their time, but who is to say that they haven't benefited from the dirty in-fighting conducted by those almost agonisingly concerned to promote the good and bash the bad?

Contemporary art is always almost all rubbish. And of the part that isn't rubbish, a substantial proportion is doomed to fairly speedy extinction. But contemporary art has a special meaning for

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its contemporaries. I talked not long ago to Hallam Tennyson for a radio programme produced by him about his famous ancestor, and listening subsequently to the symposium of views he had assembled I wished I'd made the point that Tennyson is also interesting to us because he is the nearest in time of the line of great established English poets. The rubbish is burnt up by time, yes, but what also goes is the poetic expression of much of our temporal interests. There is a sense in which even a minor poet of today has more to say to us than the illustrious poets of the past.

BECAUSE OF POETRY'S slenderer historical thread, the serious poetry reviewer, far more than the fiction reviewer (or probably any other kind of reviewer), is aware of long perspectives and "eternal" standards. In his judgments of the contemporary he will always have in mind the best of the past. He will be able to discard the obvious tripe (unless it has been so valued elsewhere as to need shredding first) but, even so, much of what he is left with he will try to bury rather than praise. Luckily for the poets involved he will have areas of indulgence, despite his high standards. For one thing, the "contemporary" interest I have referred to will operate; and in any case no reviewer can take the place of the often over-done depredations of time.

I said "the serious poetry reviewer." Perhaps I ought also to have qualified the beast with the epithet "young." I don't know how long a critic can continue to treat the books of verse put before him as though they were documents on which society's survival depended. It is not merely a matter of the reviewer mellowing with age (though that is a fairly inevitable process): there must usually come a point where fine discrimination and high principles pass over into eccentricity and crustiness. The serious young poetry reviewer is to some extent a propagandist for his own style and that of his friends, the style that he wants to take over from the styles of the past and prevail over the styles that are currently in competition. When he and his generation have at last gone their separate ways, some perhaps superannuated, what remains, critically speaking, may be mere prejudice, an antiquarian attitude. On the other hand, one must say that an early sharp critical stance may well go with a continuing creativity in maturity and old age. Pound is the great exemplar here, and it's not incongruous to refer to Grigson in the same breath. The latter's critical condemnations have no doubt become too thorough as his poetic pets have died or fallen off—fresh sympathy has been somewhat lacking —but the dissatisfied mind has led to better and better verse of his own. Ian Hamilton (now in his mid-thirties) has scarcely seen the arrival of a new

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generation with a new style to offer and try to establish, so in his case the test has not yet arisen. It's true that he has admitted younger poets to the exiguous verse pages of *the Review*, but they have usually been writing in a style that he has always allowed or that his critical antennae were anticipating.

OF COURSE, THESE GENERALITIES about a critic's progress depend much on the principles he is applying. Grigson, for instance, I suppose began with the evils anatomised by I. A. Richards very much in mind, sentimentality and over-inflated emotion particularly to be watched. And he would chalk up to a poet's credit his own virtue as a poet with an eye for external appearances. Hamilton's ultimate appeal is to the human, basically Leavisian but without any trappings about anti-human technological civilisation, a pre-industrial state of grace, or a mode of salvation. Poetry is to depict the human with all its weakness, irredeemability and messiness; and the failure of Eliot's poetry to do this in a celebratory way is at the core of Hamilton's Eliot criticism. Human joy and suffering, or, at any rate, their poetic delineation, are values in themselves.

Towards the end of its life *New Verse* began to look much more like a left-wing periodical. However, I doubt whether ideology ever played much part in Grigson's judgment of poetry, unless it can be said that in the context of his early times rational intelligibility had political connotations. Hamilton certainly is usually seen to be applying purely literary criteria: even his appeal to the amount of felt life reflected by the poet he makes only in cases, I think, where the poet's undoubted skill and talent require some further explanation of his failure. Even his attack on Robert Lowell's *Notebook* is conducted in literary terms.

AS A YOUNG MAN in the 'thirties I wrote a few poetry notices. Had they come early in the epoch I should have felt compelled to do them largely in (elementary) Marxist terms. As it was, I expect they are permeated by a Marxist flavour, irrelevant in general to the business in hand. After the War I engaged in a fair amount of poetry reviewing for *The Listener*, in which my main preoccupation was to try to slaughter the archaic and romantic, then flourishing. Later, in the *London Magazine* under John Lehmann, I did another stint, when, as I recall, I wasn't altogether grateful for the sober poetry of the "Movement" poets which had come in answer, as it were, to my previous demands. But I'm sure that as a poetry reviewer I improved; and if I were now to take it on regularly again (which God forbid) I think I should be better still. Mainly, I feel I can now discount symptoms which, though obtrusive, are not finally decisive about poetry's endurance. To take an example not intended to be invidious, I believe I could judge a new book by Edmund Blunden more justly than in the past, having come to see the merits in that poet's work aside from the often off-putting diction and sentiments which mark a deal of it.

I don't think this is merely the mellowing process: part of the better perspective stems from increased knowledge and the continuing practice of the poetic art oneself, and part because as a critic I could hardly have got worse. But whether a critic's sympathy can be rightly broadened without an austere past and a continuing testy present seems to me doubtful. Certainly one doesn't want eclecticism in a poetry reviewer; nor kindness, nor a fear of hurting friends, nor any sort of awe that a poet should have laboured to produce a volume. *Per contra*, he should, I believe, have a soft spot somewhere. Undoubtedly it has got to be in the right place—in the brain, absolutely not; and neither quite in the heart or genitals. The case of Geoffrey Grigson and Wallace Stevens is instructive (the business is summarised in my book *Owls and Artificers*). To knock Stevens in 1936, as Grigson did, was legitimate, if somewhat perverse; to speak of his "non-poetry", having the whole corpus of his work to refer to, seems to me to betray a certain smallness of spirit. Stevens's stature may still be a matter of argument, but that the author of the *Collected Poems* and *Opus Posthumous* is a poet from whatever angle he is viewed is surely indisputable.

ODDLY ENOUGH, Ian Hamilton's review of the *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, though finally with humorous exasperation acceding to Stevens's lifestyle, is also deficient in sympathetic appreciation of what, after all, is nearly 900 pages of some of the most distinguished epistolary prose in English. Moreover, there is in the letters, as in the poetry, a concern for the human condition all the more poignant for its oblique expression. It's in relation to this that Hamilton's ultimate appeal to the "human" betrays itself as inadequate, I think. The merely human, the human without art, without the reference to art's transforming and enhancing powers, the human without all that makes for art, whether it knows it or not—what is this but the merely animal or some essentially ludicrous Lawrentian primitive dream?

However, Hamilton's reviewing rarely comes to this sort of crunch. Its distinguishing method of approach, and one which pays off again and again, is the historical. How illuminating, in a

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notice about the English appearance of William Carlos Williams's *Pictures from Breughel* in 1964, to be told about Williams's early imagist past; and to be reminded, after John Berryman's emergence as a cult figure, of the side of that poet that made him an orthodox 'thirties writer. Such selective and unobtrusive scholarship has also been a general feature of *the Review*. It may seem an elementary requirement in a reviewer, but it is one which is not often adequately fulfilled.

Shortage of space may have a little to do with the lack. The present book[1] turns out to be, in the main, a collection of quite substantial pieces, and for the amplitude allowed him Hamilton gives thanks to the editors of the *Observer* and the *TLS* and (particularly) Alan Ross of the *London Magazine*. Accordingly, though there are two or three brief and effective muggings, the book's character is positive, even generous. When I was reviewing poetry for *The Listener*, J. R. Ackerley (then literary editor), wanted to make a monthly slot for a signed poetry review by a regular contributor, equal in amplitude to the then slot for novels, but failed to persuade his editor. I still feel that the regular "poetry chronicle", in the manner of Eliot's *Criterion* (and from which the title of the present book may have been inherited), is the best way of reviewing books of verse, even for the weekly periodical. Some progress has been made towards this of late, in various quarters, but the logicality of the idea has rarely been completely carried out.

IS POETRY REVIEWING important? Is the concern for its standards that I've been trying to express here more than the elevation of some minority hobby, like collecting match-boxes? To my mind the answers are all the more unquestionably affirmative in these days when poetry itself is no longer the guardian of the language. More than ever in my lifetime, poetry needs the auxiliaries of good reviewers not merely to rid it of sentimentality and worn-out diction, but also to defend syntax and traditional craft—and even to watch for the muddy dilutions of pornography. (As I write, I see an advertisement in the *New York Review of Books* for a poetry magazine "to end poetry magazines"—a tape cassette: "No paper, no type—only the poet's own voice cradling, hurling, caressing, sharing the poems which it uniquely holds.") Also, it seems to me that the academic has become

[1] *A Poetry Chronicle: Essays and Reviews.* By IAN HAMILTON. Faber & Faber, £2.95, paper £1.25

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less reliable as an arbiter of poetic taste and judgment. The reviewer has an increasingly important role to play in the longer-term establishment (or demolition) of reputations. One may often ask in vain for the hard-cover critic to rid us of the phoney, or the anthologist to admit the deserving.

Rather in the way that as one grows old one comes to value imaginative skill in a poet, aside from the polemics of the time or of past times, so one warms to intelligent interpretation in a critic, whatever his other qualities or drawbacks. There is usually little question that Ian Hamilton knows what poems mean, a far rarer virtue than may be thought. Not for him the speculative paraphrases particularly beloved by American critics, vacuuming up every scrap of association and knowledge in their own—not necessarily the poet's—minds. Nor is he ever blank before a poetic text: his own scrupulousness as a poetic practitioner gives him an insight which I think few of his genuine victims would want to complain about. The impatience with the emotionally deformed (the unexpressed standards applied here being perhaps an impossible health) time may mitigate: the wit and vigour of expression, the attentive and subtle reading, one hopes will go on and find even more space for its deployment.

The John the Baptist of Mick Jagger

On D'Annunzio—By GEORGE MACBETH

"When Rod Stewart sang with the Faces at the Silver City in Edmonton in November 1972, he came out on a stage built from sheets of solid fibre-glass, which took thirty minutes to erect, and was rumoured to have cost £60,000. In the pit of what was once a cinema, a full house of teen-age girls stood with their naked arms above their heads, clapping in unison to the beat from the banks of loudspeakers. For some of them, the dizziness remained in their ears for twenty-four hours. As Stewart ran on stage, he was dressed in skin-tight iridescent trousers and a matching jacket like a matador's suit of lights. Under the jacket, he was bare to the waist except for the incongruous check of a Stewart tartan scarf knotted round his neck. When he began to sing, he lifted the microphone on its stand and swung it above his head like a strong man's dumb-bell. Balloons and confetti fell through the auditorium in the spot-lights like golden motes in a sunbeam. Sometimes a girl would be raised on the shoulders of the mass like an offering and thrust forward by their group volition. One flung her legs around his hips and clamped her lips on his mouth to suck the last drop of precious sound into her belly. It took three men in jeans and pullovers to drag her loose and half carry her into the wings. As Stewart moved into his routine, the scarf came off like a stripper's bra. He teased the audience with it like a whip. After sixty minutes, the whole cinema was on its feet, shaking to the music in a unified ritual. No couples faced each other or danced together. Everyone faced the stage and moved to Rod Stewart. As the hour came to its climax, the professionals, the sound-men and the managers, the friends and women-folk of the group, stood back stage behind a screen of heavy equipment, coldly watching the ecstatic sea of teen-age faces surge and break on the foot-lights. At the very last moment, they came over in a ninth wave, spilling in a mess of legs and open mouths across the fibre-glass. But they were stopped, heaved back and contained by the anonymous men in jeans and pullovers as the last song came to its last gut-shattering note. According to the experts, it was the best the Faces had done. . . ."

THAT PARAGRAPH would hardly disturb the seasoned addict of *Rolling Stone*, or the reader of Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture* or George Melly's *Revolt Into Style*. It describes the sort of rock hysteria familiar since the late 1950s, and even occasionally penetrating to the front pages of the popular press through the capers of a P. J. Proby or a Donny Osmond. It also describes a wider and longer-lasting form of hero-worship known not only through the galvanised prayer-meetings of Billy Graham, but also from the expectant manifestos of the Futurists, and the speeches of Italy's number one poet-star, D'Annunzio, in 1915. Two recent books[1] allow us to follow through these ideas with a careful eye and, in the process, to reveal a whole swathe of 20th-century art and politics in a fresh light. The links between culture and action which were in the pith of what D'Annunzio and Marinetti were involved with have undoubtedly led to their

[1] *D'Annunzio*. By PHILIPPE JULLIAN. Pall Mall, £3.85. *Marinetti: Selected Writings*. Edited by R. W. FLINT. Secker & Warburg, £5.

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discredit. It was too easy to interpret their goals in the bizarre history of Mussolini, even (despite D'Annunzio's contemptuous put-down of Hitler as "the Charlie Chaplin of the *Nibelungen*") in the cauldron of Nazism.

This will only partly do. For the precocious D'Annunzio, the concept of himself in the role of "the Poet as Superman", which is how Anthony Rhodes rather narrowly stylises him in a good biography published in 1959, must have been a fairly late notion to mature, since he hadn't read much of Nietzsche before the mid-1890s, when he was over thirty. Perhaps more intriguing, though still inadequate, would be an image of Marinetti as the modern Renaissance man, a sort of jack-of-all-trades if master of none. D'Annunzio was certainly master of all trades. Everything he touched, from women to motor torpedo-boats, seemed to fossilise into an art equivalent of itself, ready for the furnishing of his personal museum. In a way, D'Annunzio's life *was* a museum, in the same way as his house, the Vittoriale, became the museum of his life. Art and action intertwined, like the indecent *soixante-neuf* figures of Mars and Venus on one of his famous jewels. Indeed, we have a hectic passage in *Notturno*, quoted by Philippe Jullian, in which this almost sexual excitement and sense of involvement with a "big" audience in the common act of bringing something to birth which will live and become rigid as a work of art is warmly focused. D'Annunzio is recalling a speech advocating Italy's entry into the First World War, delivered before a pliable crowd in front of the Garibaldi monument at Quarto:

> "The mob howls and writhes to beget its destiny. . . . The mob is like an incandescent metal. All the mouths of the mould are open. A gigantic statue is being cast."

As hinted above, there was a time when Italy-watchers (myself included—see "The Sick Rhetoric of War", *Critical Quarterly*, Summer 1964) were prone to extract anticipations of right-wing propaganda from this kind of writing. What now seems more prominent is the taste D'Annunzio exhibits here and elsewhere in his autobiographical books for transforming political occasions into theatrical performances. His relinquishment of power at Fiume, for example, has the air of being prompted by boredom with a bad series of gigs rather than disillusionment with a failed policy. Goebbels would have stuck the lack of audience response for the sake of enlarging his power-base. For D'Annunzio, as for Marinetti, the audience-response *was* his power-base, and he

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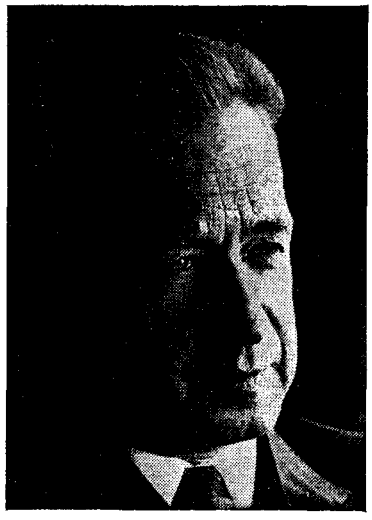

BODLEY HEAD

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lost his authority when he ceased to enjoy himself in public.

THE TOP PERIOD of D'Annunzio's career surely began when he returned from his self-imposed debauch in France to encourage the entry of Italy into the First World War. The gig recalled in the above quotation took place on the 5th of May 1915, when the poet was 52. Seven days later a crowd of 40,000 met him at the station in Rome and followed him like the Pied Piper to the Hotel Regina. On the 13th day of May, he performed from the balcony of the Capitol, and received the sword of Bixio, one of the companions of Garibaldi. A few days later, Italy entered the war, and D'Annunzio and the Futurists enlisted. The outcome of this whistle-stop tour of Italy is a cause for alarm and surprise, as well as envy. Perhaps we may forgive historians for concentrating on the grim future of D'Annunzio's achievement rather than its richly self-projective present. Time, and the surfacing of the rock-star, has allowed us a new look.

At an earlier point in the passage from *Notturno* already quoted, D'Annunzio supplies a nicely punning entry for our study. It begins to show how the intensive totality of his performances approaches that of a gut-entertainer of the early '70s, like Rod Stewart with The Faces:

> "Faces, faces, faces; every passion from every face runs through my wounded eye, innumerable as grains of warm sand through the fist. Is it not the Roman crowd of May, the evening of the Capitol? Enormous, swaying, howling. I feel my pallor burning like a white flame. There is nothing of myself left in me. I am like the demon of tumult, I am like the genius of the free people. . . ."

Note how D'Annunzio obliquely anticipates the disorientating impact of a heavy band through his concept of himself as "the demon of tumult." In some of his speeches (apparently unfamiliar to M. Jullian), there are further hints of this pre-psychedelic *ilinx* (or "whirling", as Roger Caillois calls it) in the somewhat star-spangled descriptions of bombardment and assault. For example, in *The Soldier's Crown*, describing the capture of the Veliki in the heights of the Venetian Carso in 1918, he has this to say:

> "Sometimes the shells gave out a clear sound as of beaten cymbals. Their very crash seemed to be golden, like powerful bars of forceful music beaten on golden timbrels. The beginning of an assault was like those dizzy dances one watches in the land of dreams."

D'Annunzio, of course, was a pregnant influence on the Futurists, as they to some extent were on him, and these "dizzy dances" may have been the sort of thing Marinetti had in mind in his descriptions of the *Dance of The Shrapnel*, dated a year earlier on 8 July 1917:

> "*Movement* 1: With the feet mark the *boom-boom* of the projectile coming from the cannon's mouth. *Movement* 2: With arms spread apart describe at moderate speed the long whistling parabola of the shrapnel as it passes over the soldier's head and explodes too high or behind him. The *danseuse* will hold up a sign printed in blue: *Short to the right.*"

The extent of this operatic preoccupation with loud noise could be elaborated. But there are other areas in which the D'Annunzian style suggests anticipations of the rock world of the early '70s. As Philippe Jullian skilfully points out, D'Annunzio was one of the first in the long line of Roxy Music dandies to strip for titillation. He exposed himself along the beach at Versilia "with his horses, his dogs, and a superb mistress." When fully dressed, he took care to appear at the edge of *outré* fashion, often in a variety of slightly ludicrous uniforms, military, equestrian, and even a sort of Batman cloak for flying. His poses in this gear—which cameras and brushes always seem to have been on tap to record for posterity—are in the same teasingly witty mode as the group stances of the Futurists, so dashingly revealed in the travelling *Futurismo* exhibition recently at the Royal Academy. It was a David Bailey world that D'Annunzio moved in, and he often seemed to star in the real-life claustrophobia of his home movies as Mick Jagger did in *Performance*, at once the catalyst and the apex of his own décor. Indeed, the quirky spirit of D'Annunzio's ambience was catching, as we gather from Osbert Sitwell's recollections of his entourage at Fiume:

> "The general animation and noisy vitality seemed to herald a new land, a new system. . . . Every man seemed to wear a uniform designed by himself: some had beards, and had shaved their heads completely, so as to resemble the Commander himself, who was now bald; others had cultivated huge tufts of hair, half a foot long, waving out from their foreheads, and wore, balanced on the very back of the skull, a black fez."

It might almost be a description of a UFO concert, or the Roundhouse bar.

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Hamish Hamilton [hh]

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Indeed, the hint of atrocious pleasures which is perhaps one of the subliminal attractions in a tourist walk through Earls Court was a gay feature of the Fiume scene, too, as M. Jullian dryly points out:

> D'Annunzio closed his eyes to the morals of his Theban legion and on more than one occasion shared its pleasures.

The reference is to the rape of shepherd-boys. Indeed, some of D'Annunzio's best writing celebrates the manly emotions of comradeship recollected in tranquillity:

> "I see again the feline eye of Maurizio Pagliano, greenish, phosphorescent, the iris cut by the half-closed lid. I see the insolent mouth of Luigi Gori, his blond hair like watered silk. . . ."

What *did* they get up to? Certainly the vivid stimulus of his daily cocaine must have helped to keep D'Annunzio's nerves at the fever pitch much of his later writing required. Indeed, Philippe Jullian believes that, after the flying accident which wounded his eye, "D'Annunzio let himself be carried away by the visions produced by the damaged retina, similar to those caused by a hallucinatory drug." Passages from *Notturno* support this. As D'Annunzio says:

> "For more than a year I enclosed my misery in my extinguished eye, which the demon of the retina rekindled with a primordial life, peopled with unknown worlds, and filled with beings and races without history, without destiny, without horizon. I took part in an unremitting toil, accompanied by an insane anxiety."

The more articulate mescalin and acid reports of Huxley, Lennon and McClure correspond.

WE SHALL PERHAPS never know the extent of D'Annunzio's absorption into the by-ways of male sex and drug-experiment. Certainly, it was the more central marriage of technology and women, as in his machine novel *Forse che sì, forse che no*, which struck many readers as his unique novelty, and still preserves his densest impact. Of course, he had predecessors here, notably the voluptuous Casanova, who invented a sprung seduction-chair for pinioning a client's arms and legs, and advancing her belly. However, D'Annunzio's technology (despite his coarsely physical, and often oral, commandments to his mistresses) was more mistily symbolic. He was with Marinetti one of the first men to associate the act of love with the motor-car (though the famous proprietor who named his machine after his daughter, Mercedes, was another). He was also one of the first men to associate sex with the aeroplane, and to fly high in search of it. In the days of Led Zeppelin and the Soft Machine,

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this fascination with inflation and machinery is entirely credible. In a world of speed and decibels, the echoes of the *Libro Segreto* take on a fertile consistency.

Perhaps the final link between D'Annunzio's bi-focal significance—as politician prefiguring Hitler, and as rock-star anticipating the Beatles—lies in his commitment to the iconography of Richard Wagner. He rented a house belonging to Wagner's daughter, and his famous war-cry, invented as he flew over Pola in 1916, has the ring of something out of *Die Walküre*. When Gene Vincent had them rocking to *Be-Bop-A-Lula* in 1956, he was perhaps unconscious of how the Italian flyers had shouted *Eia! Eia! Alala!*, and even that the Rhine Maidens had sung *Wallala weiala weia!* as they swam and praised their gold. But the simple, atavistic power of these basic rhythms and phrases goes deeper than culture and theory, down to its rocky bottom in the language of the tribe. In that primitive place, the origins of art and energy are interlocked, and there is no satisfaction to be got, save in the strenuous expression of the need for it. Where that happens, the line from Wagner through D'Annunzio to Mick Jagger is clear and vibrant.

On Losing the Rabbit

New Novels—By JONATHAN RABAN

OH DEAR YES, the modern novel must be modern. Its knowing tricks and mannered intricacies, now floridly gothic, now scrupulously minimal, so often seem pointlessly ingenious, exhausted and professorial. Experimental fiction—one's heart sinks at the phrase—mostly reads like aimless doodling in the lab on a government grant; while the latest American models, still warm from the Barth and discreetly scented with Nabokov Number 5, never quite lose the old-sock smell of the seminar and its empty intellection. Techniques which once shocked and ambiguated—fictions within fictions, cod editorial apparatus, authors speaking *in propria persona* to the reader, blank pages, books in boxes, metaphors about plots and libraries, arbitrary interferences with the lives of characters—are now part of the casual stock-in-trade of the merest graduate student in creative writing. I recently had occasion to look up Mary McCarthy's famous *New Republic* review of *Pale Fire;* it is a period document now. Ten years ago, there was a heady excitement at what Barth and Nabokov and Borges were up to: turning conventions on their heads, using pedantry as a springboard for a high dive into the blue of illusionism, opening the novel to the interior, mirror world of the self. Today the hegemony of mock-pedantry seems just as scrofulous as the real thing, the conjuror's patter a routine learned too well, the old excitement dead with repetition.

In an age of the "anti-novel", do novelists still read the novels they are anti? Or are they reared on Poe, Joyce, Nabokov, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet and Butor? One fears so. A *Times* reviewer praises B. S. Johnson by saying that he has "always rejected the Dickensian limitations of the novel." Funny, that. I had always imagined that it was the other way round, but perhaps Dickens is fantastically limited when you look at the mind-blowing wide-open windy spaces of Mr Johnson. On second thoughts, we had all better get our heads down over the fine print of the Collins Classics, and take the prelim exam on *Bleak House, Martin Chuzzlewit, Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend.* No novel under review here is a quarter as adventurous, limitless or "experimental" as any one of those four.

Yet even the most circumspect and traditionally-minded reader will grant that the modern novel is under a real pressure to escape its past, and that its tricks, intrusions and guffaws are symptoms of something serious and difficult. The rise of the novel, as Ian Watt has shown, coincided with the rise of the mercantile middle class. Like the people by whom and for whom it was written, the novel was curious, acquisitive, aware of its own novelty, obsessed with the present and the way in which the present could be turned into history. It grew fat on the identification between people and their possessions—it treated *things* as if they had an intrinsic moral value. It was about money, marriage, the family; it handled etiquette and manners lovingly and respectfully, as species of morality.

CAN IT STILL do so now? *The Air Cage*[1] by Per Wästberg is a chastening case in point—a bourgeois novel at the end of its tether. Its English reviewers have been noticeably snooty

[1] *The Air Cage.* By PER WÄSTBERG. Translated by THOMAS TEAL. Souvenir Press, £2.75.

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about it; even the writer of a *Guardian* profile of the author managed to sound superior about the book. It has been briskly dismissed for its long-windedness, for the pretentiousness of its dialogue, for the banal lyricism of its sexual description. Everyone has given it its marching orders, trailing it at the end of reviews, several of which tiptoed in awe around Mr Johnson's latest *jeu*. Yet on most counts, Wästberg exhibits a much more palpable intelligence than Johnson: he has all the conventional novelist's virtues—he notices things, and finds the right phrases for them, he is interested in ideas, his characters read and think, and he makes relationships between men and women into something more than pick-up talk followed by rolls over the sofa.

The trouble is that Wästberg, for all his blurb-puffer's cant about his "world" being "decades ahead" of Updike's, writes as if the 20th century had not happened, and gets into an impossible tangle as a result. *The Air Cage* is one volume of a chronicle of modern life, and it is about the triangle of a brother who has married his half-sister and the girl they both love. This peculiar arrangement is presented not as a case of jealous adultery, but as a new sort of family; we watch it establishing dynastic roots, settling, quite cosily, into an innovatory normality, and making this state real by constructing a solid nest of property and commodities. And what a nest it turns out to be. Wästberg's characters are super-consumers. In a Sweden of international investment, glass and concrete, supermarkets and arching freeways, they are always on the move, eating things, buying things, drowning in an ocean of luxury goods and communications technology. When they are not speeding somewhere in the Volvo, or jetting to foreign parts (the hero is an airport controller), they are talking incessantly over the phone. They spend words as negligently as they spend money. They even fuck each other over the phone, their bodies plugged together electronically, long-distance, those sensitive little diaphragms bouncing up and down on their magnets in a tinny dither of ecstasy.

The country they live in is fecund and synthetic, a nightmare department store of consumables. There is too much of everything. In the characters, this breeds an earnest concern for ecology—Jenny, the mistress, works in the Department of the Environment, "systematizing ecological inventories." Old habits die hard: the only way to halt the spread of technological junk is to hoard information about nature, and ecology itself is treated as a form of intellectual consumption. But the author, too, is imprisoned by the inventory; there is too much for pen to record, and he

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breaks into descriptive passages that are simply frantic lists of more commodities:

> And he dimly saw the city's smudgy edges, with occasional buildings under construction, and cow barns that had become warehouses and workshops, and hay barns where young people fixed motorcycles and slept with each other, and small factories already driven to their knees by progress, and gravel pits, and compost heaps, and fire-ravaged lots full of wild strawberries and digitalis. And fast on the heels of slum and disorder came the low, pretty schools, the new churches, the youth centres and the educational societies, the row houses, the high-rise, and the covered bus stops for the feeder lines.
>
> It was his city, his world, winking on and off before his eyes like a tremendous instrument panel.

The interesting thing about this passage is the complete inertia of its narrator. Dickens loved inventories too, but in his work they are always tightly, often satirically, controlled; they convey the grotesque orthodoxy of people who have lots of the same sorts of things. For Wästberg, the inventory is a symptom of his exhaustion at the meaningless prolixity of the Sweden he is trying to describe; his eye glazes over as he contemplates the profuse multiplication of things in this under-peopled landscape.

He instructs us that the way out of the mess lies in truthful nakedness, in the lovers' uncluttered embrace. But he is not very convincing. Copulation gives rise to more lists, and we get breasts and buttocks, testicles and mouths, piling up in a heap, and, like their owners, keeping on the move and going to some surprising places. Even the language used by Wästberg and his characters is subject to this process of mad mechanical reproduction. A simple sentence can always be relied on to give birth to its paradoxical negative:

> A person can be wounded by a passion when he feels it and when he stops feeling it.
>
> "I've got no gift for hysteria and tears."
> "You've got an advantage over the people who have no control."

And so forth. Of course these slipshod contradictions are "real"; they persuade us that life in the novel is just as difficult and complicated as life outside it, and goes on almost as long. But they won't do. The book silts up with this accumulation of matter until what might have been a powerful and straightforward traditional narrative is reduced to a mean muddy dribble of sense. It chokes on the century and the system of which it tries to make an inventory—a victim, really, of its own insights. Hints of tenderness get lost down the telephone lines; and in the background there are letters from a friend in Africa—a continent as yet unasphyxiated by commodities. One feels that Wästberg would be happier in Botswana than in Stockholm; that in Africa the kind of novel he would like to write is still a possibility.

THE AIR CAGE teeters on the brink of parody; one more step, and it would turn into an elaborate literary joke about the bourgeois novel. But Wästberg has no gift for humour, and seems curiously unaware of the direction in which his own writing impels him. Perhaps he would benefit from the exuberant spirituous overflow of some of B. S. Johnson's talents. For Mr Johnson knows everything, and has a tiresomely indiscriminate appetite for jokes of every kind—pedantic, scatological, schoolboy, pub bore. His fiction is naughty, brutish, and short. *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry*[2] reads as if it had been written with *The Bluffer's Guide to Laurence Sterne* at one elbow, and *101 Things for a Boy to Make and Do on a Wet Afternoon* at the other.

It is an overstretched, under-explored gag which might have led a previous, more persuasive if less elevated existence on the Morecambe and Wise show. Christie Malry (you may, on a wet afternoon, rearrange his name to make SMIRCH REALITY, or CHRIST MARY LIE, and no doubt many more amusing things) starts an account-book to keep a tally of his score against society. Not being very bright, or particularly happy in his work, he soon finds that society's debt to him is rather large, and even after such sidesplitting japes as killing off 20,479 West Londoners by dumping cyanide in a reservoir, he cannot make his figures balance. Mr Johnson, whose frequent addresses to the reader are phrased in the manner of a pantomime dame asking the children to shout when they spot the wicked uncle, is an economical fellow himself. He gives his hero one widowed mother for family, then kills her off as soon as she has made her big speech. He finds a girl-friend for Christie in a dance hall, and makes her do interesting things to his private parts with a vacuum cleaner and some shaving foam. Most of the descriptive energies of the book, though, are concentrated on the toys and contrivances which this oafish creature dreams up to get his own back on society. A stick of gelignite on a clockwork train, How To Make A Molotov Cocktail, falsifying an order form so that his firm receives five tons of carbon paper . . . Christie, a simple soul, is as delighted with these wheezes as his author, and the novel proceeds with a *ho, ho, ho* and a *ha, ha, ha* until one or the other of them suffers a sudden lassitude, and Christie dies of cancer.

[2] *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry*. By B. S. JOHNSON. Collins, £2.

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Waugh Minimus has already offered the Nobel Prize for literature to Mr Johnson on the strength of this uncompelling little giggle, and the book comes larded with an encomium (among others) from a real Nobel winner, Samuel Beckett. And it does have some evident, though I feel they are easy, virtues. It is lightly, readably written in the joke-pedantic style popularised by Anthony Burgess, including Burgessiologisms such as "helminthoid" and "cryptorchid" and "fastigium." Johnson is always gleefully reminding the reader that this is all fiction, a card-house of lies, and that he is manipulating his puppet-characters for a strictly didactic purpose; none of your *trompe l'oeil* nonsense here. So we may, if we wish, treat the book as a novel about writing novels, an essay on the relationship between authority and authorship, on Mr Johnson as the unjust god of his tiny world. (The problem here is that it takes only a very little ingenuity to argue the same point about every novel ever written; a few beers, and *Barchester Towers* turns into a masterpiece of the fiction of fiction—you start with "towers" as a metaphor . . . .) More seriously, perhaps, *Christie Malry* rejects a class as it rejects a literary tradition. Social and literary economics are seen to be aspects of the same thing, and Johnson's cut-down comic-strip prose stands for a new kind of world in which moral vision is unimpaired by the commodities of the world we actually inhabit. But novels like this, because of the very slightness of their texture and detail, are invitation cards to an orgy of speculation. They are as good, or as bad, as the critic's capacity to make something of them, DIY kits for building cathedrals out of a few strips of balsa wood and a scrap or two of cellophane paper.

THE INCREASINGLY exquisite refinement of Muriel Spark's work proceeds from similar preoccupations to those of Mr Johnson. Since *The Public Image*, she has been putting her writing through a sieve, working towards a light, transparent, musical prose which is capable of supporting a heavy burden of meaning on the frailest of details. In *The Driver's Seat* and *Not To Disturb*, I felt that she was like a conjuror whose technique is so perfect that he loses the rabbit altogether and the point of his act disappears with the animal. Both novels were so scrupulous, so drained of the superfluous ordinary world, that they were hardly more than gossamer webs of theology and literary theory. In *The Hothouse By The East River*,[3] the sleight of hand is brilliantly timed; the rabbit goes, then comes back again . . . and Miss Spark pitches her troubling parable exactly midway between pure metaphysical illusion and the solid landscape of bourgeois fact and society.

Her literary models now are professedly Robbe-Grillet and the *nouveaux romanciers*. She despises the novel as a form of mere social mimesis and writes a kind of polyphonic prose (the term is Amy Lowell's) which is closer to allegorical verse than to the loose fustian of conventional fiction. Every sentence *sounds:* each one possesses what Miss Brodie would call Poise—its syntax is painfully simple, its stresses fall regularly, it has a contrived delirious clarity. One can almost scan a page of Miss Spark's writing, and its predominant rhythms are those of a nursery-rhyme poetry of pure statement—

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace;
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.

As with Milne, proper names and set phrases are the basic ingredients, and they are rearranged like counters to form metrical patterns. One watches a mess of ordinary shrill gossip taking shape under one's eye until it is perfectly transmuted, disinterred from the literal, liberated into meaningfulness:

[3] *The Hothouse By The East River*. By MURIEL SPARK. Macmillan, £1·95.

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"Where are you going?" he says, standing there.
"Van Cleef's," she says.
"What for?"
"To buy a present."
"Who for?"
"Myself," Elsa says.
"Oh," says Paul.

It is a style that is absolutely recognisable as Muriel Spark's own, and oddly inimitable. It has a single-minded purpose—to resurrect the fabulous from the junkshop of everyday life and speech.

Miss Spark's heroines—Lise in *The Driver's Seat*, Elsa in this new book—not only sound like echoes of Carroll's Alice, they are similarly placed, cunning innocents in an absurd and corrupt world which dissolves as they question it. This world, which resembles our own in that it shares the names of countries, and has nightclubs, off-off-Broadway theatres, psychoanalysts, shoe-shops, exiled princesses and laconic barmen, is unlike our world in one central respect: in it everything signifies. There are very few details, little casual colour, but when an object does exist, it tells. Elsa has a shadow which falls peculiarly sideways. Her husband Paul pronounces the word "bloody" as "blawdy", unable to get the sound of blood right.

New York, where the characters live in the present tense of the book, seems so like New York. They fret over the air-conditioning, drink coffee, go for sprees on the town. Elsa has other problems besides her shadow, and keeps her analyst on a short lead. Her uncertainty about her own and everyone else's identity seems much like that of most other pampered madwomen. There is a Past, which may or may not explain the present, which took place in The Compound, a military establishment attached to a POW camp in wartime England. Gradually all the characters from the Compound assemble in New York, just as they might in any paranoid's haunted imagination. But the details don't quite tally; troublesome discrepancies are exposed, and it is borne in on us (if we are dim on titles) that the hothouse by the East River is Purgatory, that the characters are long dead, and that their existence in each other's imagined lives is the product of a gross communal selfishness, an immoral refusal to die. They are shades summoned by shades, and their city, like E. M. Forster's cow, will disappear if they relax their frantic attention on it for a second. Yet Miss Spark makes it our city too. Her Italy in *The Driver's Seat* and her Switzerland in *Not To Disturb* were too vague to cast doubt on their sublunar namesakes; her New York is a place you can walk through, smell, and feel—it is as ferociously imagined by the novelist as by the characters.

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THE CONSPIRACY theory of reality is, of course, a commonplace in recent fiction, but Muriel Spark's exploration of it, enriched by a peculiar combination of Catholic hope and guilt and severe Platonic philosophy, is entirely original. In Iris Murdoch's new novel, *The Black Prince*,[4] the same broad theme wears, at first glance, a familiar shop-soiled air. Here are editorial prefaces and appendices, a middle-aged man in pursuit of a girl-child who hardly exists outside of his writing about her, a sprinkling of chess-symbolism, numerous diversions and dissertations upon aesthetics and the morality of literary creation, some dusty scholarship, and a catch-as-catch-can title (Edward II, Hamlet, the Prince of Darkness, perhaps an extra piece for the chess-board . . . Bradley Pearson takes a shine from all of these). A great deal of the book, including the fussy pedantry of the narrator, all squeam and arch quotation marks and italicisations, looks as if it has been ransacked piecemeal from the Nabokov shelf. Yet this novel, despite its trail of still-bloody umbilical cords, is Miss Murdoch's best for a very long time; an uneven haphazard book which never seems to be quite sure about where

[4] *The Black Prince*. By IRIS MURDOCH. Chatto & Windus, £2·50.

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it is going, but which is so ambitious in its—rather too many—directions that it can afford its failures. It has a reassuringly old-fashioned lumpish density, resonant with atmospheric detail, strong on incident, and marvellously satirically observant of the society it embodies.

Bradley Pearson, Miss Murdoch's Kinbote/Humbert, lives in a prissy bachelor flat in Fitzrovia, under the shadow of the Post Office Tower. Like that much maligned monument (and Miss Murdoch deserves two cheers for giving it its first romantic celebration in literature), Pearson is at the centre of a communications network, a writer who has written almost nothing, just retired from his job as a taxman. He respects silence and withdrawal, and detests his erstwhile protégé Arnold Baffin for his prolific output of fashionable junk fiction. He is someone for whom freedom means the right not to act, for whom art is the loss of self in the object. Other people have crises, families, love affairs, adventures, failures; not Bradley Pearson. He only has unwritten books, for which he prepares himself in monkish solitude.

Since he will not go to the world, Miss Murdoch brings the world to his flat, and holds him, the immaculate artist, responsible for the world's catastrophes. His telephone begins to ring: his friend has bashed his wife over the head with a poker, his own ex-wife turns up, newly widowed, from the Midwest, his brother-in-law cadges money off him, his sister leaves her husband and plumps herself, sacklike, upon him, he gets screwed by the wife who was lately bashed with the poker, he falls desperately, aesthetically, in love with her daughter Julian, named after Norwich's lady saint. It is all acutely disturbing to someone for whom the "awful privacy" of family life is repellent and constricting. Miss Murdoch revels in his discomfiture. The best scenes in the novel, *pace* those reviewers who have found deep significations in Bradley's addled Shakespeare tutorial with his nymphet, are those in which bells ring, doors open, neurotics weep into upstairs eiderdowns, while carefully-separated friends seize the chance to gossip behind Bradley's back in his own living room. These episodes are noisy, maddening, acutely claustrophobic, and they are executed with a relish which has been absent for too long from Miss Murdoch's work.

But Bradley, this whining, scholarly innocent, is somehow responsible for it all. While he is on a mawkish idyll with his girl, his sister kills herself. Later, when the lady proves more efficient with the poker than her husband, it is Bradley who is efficiently framed for his murder. Death, dissolution and cruelty flower around him, while he prattles of the privileges of the artist, and slides out of life and into words. He is the exemplary creator. His manuscript, like Humbert's, is written in prison, and the world it records is a posthumous one. What we can see, but he cannot, is that he is to blame for its evil—he is a true prince of Darkness. When he says Love, all we see is negligence and corruption. When he talks of art, of his book, we see something alarmingly like the world we live in, a messy, promiscuous, amoral place in which it is impossible to act, or not to act, without doing incalculable harm. Even his supreme creation, Julian, on whom he wastes the idle affections of a god, turns out to be just a rather ordinary, rather silly, rather nasty girl who writes bad poems. Flaubert died screaming with rage at the immortality of Emma Bovary; Julian survives Bradley in an afterword, in which she sounds merely like a fifth-rate imitation of Bradley himself. It is a common fate of creators, and of created humans too.

As a book about evil, a devil's monologue, *The Black Prince* is superb. In Bradley Pearson, Miss Murdoch has found a persona in which she can satisfactorily sink the awkwardnesses of her own prose; in him that curious alternation between the tone of a tart philosophy seminar and that of a purple passage in Ouida sounds perfectly convincing. He is, one suspects, the writer whom Miss Murdoch fears herself to be, and by exposing him she has written a very fine, very black book. I have hardly mentioned the tricksy apparatus which surrounds it; it is just scaffolding—necessary, perhaps, for the novel's construction, but unsightly and distracting now it's finished. *The Black Prince* does not need to advertise its modernity so modishly; it is too good for that.

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Porn & the Liberals

Thoughts after Longford

By Peregrine Worsthorne

IF SOME CONTEMPORARY Polonius or Lord Chesterfield were to seek to give advice to an aspiring young man on how to get on in polite metropolitan society he would have to issue a very special warning against becoming involved in any group or body opposing pornography. For some reason polite metropolitan society, tolerant of so much else, refuses to be tolerant of those peculiar misfits who wish to declare themselves against the spread of pornography. Poor Lord Longford was very much esteemed by polite society until he disclosed his predilections in this direction. Few public men's reputation stood higher. Yet now he is at best a figure of fun, an object of derision to the sophisticated and well-connected. Not since Lord George Gordon has a member of the aristocracy been so unpopular with the reigning establishment.

Why is this? What is there about pornography which makes it so dangerous for consenting adults to come together to discuss its prohibition in public? Nobody surely would deny the possibility that pornography may be socially undesirable. Whether it is or not is clearly a perfectly proper subject for debate. A number of committees made up of men and women known to be of a liberal disposition on this question had already studied it without their members being subjected to public mockery. So what was so funny or undesirable about Lord Longford's decision to set up a study group of men and women known to be of a less liberal disposition on this particular question?

I would like to dwell on this aspect of the problem for a moment, because it seems to me of some importance. When Lord Longford asked me to join his group it did not occur to me that I was risking my reputation, such as it is, of *un homme sérieux*. It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that there was a very good case, in the public interest, for a non-permissive group to consider aspects of the problem of pornography which might have been overlooked by the more fashionable of the prevailing pundits. I assumed that this reaction of mine would be shared by most thoughtful people.

Several of my closest friends, however, took me aside and warned me that joining the group would do me great damage. Lunching at the Garrick Club one day, I found myself in a cluster of guests who rebuked me vehemently and loudly for joining such "a disreputable gang", rather as Harold Nicolson might have been rebuked for joining Mosley's blackshirts in the 1930s. This, I may add, was before the study group had even begun to meet. And so it continued. It was enough for someone to mention that one was a member of the Longford committee for any social gathering to dissolve into incredulous mirth or, in some cases, harden into indignant hostility.

THIS IS NOT a sob story, and I am not complaining. But it is surely worth recording that in polite London society *circa* 1972, the mere act of joining a group known to be hostile to pornography involved instant ridicule, and even a certain measure of social ostracism. Of course Marie Stopes suffered far more when she first made public her advocacy of birth control, as no doubt did Havelock Ellis when he first started writing freely about sexual perversion. The conservatives of the period had a high old time turning them both into laughing stocks. But then the conservatives did not claim to be liberal. The liberals, on the other hand, do. They place their faith in free and open debate, believing that truth can only be reached by a clash of argument. Yet their treatment of Lord Longford, long before the report was published, was not all that different from the treatment meted out to Marie Stopes. She was mocked and derided and turned into a cranky figure of fun, her name becoming almost a dirty word in polite society.

It may be objected that such treatment became inevitable after the famous visit to Copenhagen. Yet even here a little caution should be observed. Given the social climate of Britain at the turn of the century it was equally inevitable that a woman campaigning for birth control would be turned into a laughing stock. But this has never been accepted by the liberal mind as a justification for her being submitted to this fate. That she should have been is now thought to tell us more about the inherent stupidity, or narrow-mindedness, of society at that time than about the absurdity of her actions. And so it may be with Lord Longford's visit to Copenhagen. To later generations, it may be that those who mocked will seem the real fools.

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BUT BE THAT AS IT MAY, the point surely is that liberals and progressives joined enthusiastically in this mockery of Lord Longford, and showed every sign of finding the sport immensely to their taste. There was, at this stage, no attempt to argue with him. Ridicule was the weapon wielded, not always very nicely. Blue jokes about his wife and family went the rounds, rather as they did about Profumo. What was odd in this particular case, however, is that this hounding of a public man was positively encouraged by the élite who usually find such coarse manifestations of popular ribaldry highly distasteful. Not for an instant does it seem to have crossed the liberal mind that Lord Longford was experiencing exactly the familiar ordeal meted out to anybody who behaves in a manner ahead of his times or in a manner unacceptable to the prevailing mores; or that they, by endorsing and approving such behaviour, were reacting much like any other established group to the advocacy of unpopular ideas.

NONE OF THIS, of course, suggests for a second that Lord Longford's views about pornography have anything to commend them. The fact that their spokesman was derided and traduced by polite society does not necessarily prove that he was right. It may be that the liberal establishment is right. Establishments very often are. But are they ever right to act the bully boy in this way? I do not object at all to those who say that Lord Longford's views about pornography are a lot of nonsense. But I do object intensely to a state of affairs when I am warned quite seriously that it would be better for my professional career not to be associated with him, and when all the media join together to laugh him out of court before he has ever had an opportunity to submit his case.

This does not seem to me how a liberal society should treat its critics, or those who seek to challenge some of its assumptions. It is a bad omen for the new liberal dispensation if so mild and civilised a critic as Lord Longford, taking exception to one aspect of the liberal creed, should be given this kind of deadly going-over, the like of which I cannot recall for any other social reformer in my lifetime.

I use the description "social reformer" advisedly. For why should the reigning liberal establishment get away with smearing those who would wish to change their order by branding them as "social reactionaries"? Can they not even envisage the possibility that the present arrangements governing pornography may be improvable? Or that their views on this matter might benefit from being challenged? This is a monstrously arrogant and over-bearing attitude. Not surprising, of course, since history suggests that every new establishment protects its power base with ferocious zeal in its early days of possession, over-reacting to the slightest challenge. But what is so depressing about the Longford experience is that the liberal establishment, from which one might have hoped for a more civilised reaction, is proving itself no less narrow-minded, no less intolerant, no less blinkered, no less abusive—in a word, no less illiberal—than those that have gone before.

Their excuse is that they are being intolerant in defence of tolerance, illiberal so as to be better able to defend freedom, etc. I must confess to a certain loathing for this kind of humbug. It is on a par with those authoritarians who start justifying the suspension of civil liberties with the cry "the country is in danger" as soon as some crippled foreign anarchist starts raising his voice in whispers within earshot of Oxford or Cambridge. By no stretch of the imagination can it be said that Lord Longford and his group constituted the kind of threat to freedom which would justify the subtly bullying tactics to which they were subjected. None of the members, still less the chairman, have given any grounds for assuming that they are opposed to a free society. For the liberal establishment to seek to give the impression that a concern about pornography is an indication of incipient fascism is no less intellectually contemptible than when a conservative establishment in the old days used to try to suggest that a belief in free love was a mark of incipient communism.

What one must be concerned about, and very urgently concerned, is the suggestion which was very sedulously spread that the Longford group was not only comical in composition but somehow also sinister in intent, and for these reasons not worthy of even the normal decencies of civilised consideration.

Let me give a small but revealing example. A bright young man, Gyles Brandreth by name, joined the study group at its outset, and was included in the party which visited Copenhagen. On his return he wrote an article in *Nova* magazine in which he revealed that his only object in joining the group had been to expose it, or send it up, from the inside, which he proceeded to do. Now one might have thought that such behaviour was worthy of censure. If another kind of young man had joined, say, the movement for the abolition of capital punishment with equally deceitful motives, and written an article from the inside revealing its private deliberations, surely it would have been regarded as rather a cad's trick. Mr Brandreth, however, was much acclaimed for

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his brave initiative and his journalistic career has gone from strength to strength, culminating with a full page profile in the *New Statesman*. And who was the first person the BBC invited to comment on the Longford report when it eventually came out? Gyles Brandreth.

IT IS NO GOOD, as I say, objecting that Lord Longford invited this kind of treatment. Far from this being an excuse, it is a central part of the indictment. It is precisely because anti-pornographers do invite this treatment that true liberals should be determined to see that they do not receive it. I am the first to admit that the case for controlling pornography is a very difficult one to make; that it involves challenging certain progressive principles that are held by many as sacred truths; that the very mention of censorship is enough to make most decent citizens blow their top; that the overwhelming majority of élite educated opinion is genuinely and deeply shocked by the anti-permissive case. But surely these obstacles in the way of getting the subject a fair hearing should have prompted the true liberal to approach the Longford group with respect rather than contempt, recognising in their own instinctive reactions of suspicion and repugnance all the symptoms of a bad attack of illiberal prejudice caused by minds snapping shut.

WHAT I WOULD LIKE the present liberal generation to consider is the possibility that they may be in danger of displaying a new variety of irrational hysteria, of authoritarian dogmatism, of arrogant certitude which may seem to posterity no less unedifying than the conservative variety which it is beginning to replace. Let us take as a prime example Mr Bernard Levin. His review of the Longford Report in *The Observer* would seem to me to illustrate this point very nicely. At no point does he make the slightest effort to understand the case against pornography which the Report seeks to marshal. The style, tone and content of the review is angrily dismissive.

> "This vast brantub, the contents of which are a thousand parts chaff to one part wheat, is not only useless: it has effectively ruined the market for a serious study, by some such means as an academic team or a Royal Commission, of the problem (if there is one) of pornography. It is also dangerous, in that whatever the good intentions of those responsible for it, it will be used by the unthinking, the demagogic, the freedom-hating and the malevolent, to bolster their demands for further restrictions on publication, exhibition and performance."

A little later in the review, even the concession about the Commission's good intentions is withdrawn:

> "Lord Longford and his group are simply concerned to ban what they find disgusting, even if what they find disgusting does more good than harm."

Finally, commenting on a Report contributor's regret that in sex education society is increasingly relying on "so-called expert opinion in preference to natural common sense", Mr Levin says that the call, implicit in these words, is unmistakably "for more ignorance and prejudice and less knowledge and objectivity"—a call to which "Lord Longford and his group have responded in full and generous measure."

I know Mr Levin to be a fair and thoughtful man, but these are not fair and thoughtful remarks. In the first place, the Longford Study Group was only set up after it had become clear that the Government had no intention of setting up a Royal Commission on the subject and that no university had the slightest intention of initiating an academic study either. Mr Levin also knows very well that he had never advocated the setting up of a Royal Commission and would have opposed such an idea as a waste of public time.

In other words, his regret that the Longford Report had pre-empted a better study of the subject is totally insincere. But it is more than insincere; it is also absurd. The subject of pornography is manifestly inappropriate for treatment by a Royal Commission or even by some kind of official academic body. It raises moral, social and political questions that cannot be answered by the taking of evidence, or by scientific analysis. To insist, therefore, that this is a subject fit only for official examination, and should not be dabbled in by amateurs, is to insist, consciously or unconsciously, that it should not be examined at all. Or, if examined, only in a manner wherein pornography is almost certain to be vindicated, at least to Mr Levin's satisfaction.

FOR IT CAN NEVER BE demonstrated or proved that pornography is harmful, in the sense that tobacco smoking can be proved to be harmful. To set up a Royal Commission to study pornography would be like setting up a Royal Commission to study family life or maternal love. I happen to be very much in favour of family life and maternal love, but I know that a number of thoughtful people believe that society would be much better off with less of both. Still, I would not think of condemning any group of such opponents who produced a private report to this effect for not having waited for a Royal Commission on the subject, or an academic report. Or if I did I would be very well aware that I was in effect seeking to prevent them from propagating their case, since the dangers of family life and maternal love cannot be scientifically or statistically ascertained or demonstrated. It would take laboratory experiments involving a whole society over many generations to establish the case

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against, or the case for, either. The same is true about pornography.

Of course Mr Levin knows this. He knows that any Royal Commission on pornography would be bound to conclude that its harmfulness cannot be demonstrated. Will he not understand, therefore, that by seeking to preserve the subject for this kind of treatment he is in fact protecting it from critical examination, secreting it away in some privileged haven where it cannot be damaged by public concern, giving it an absolute immunity formerly reserved in the age of faith only to the Deity himself?

I AM NOT AT ALL SURE that this is a commendable liberal attitude. Something rather akin to it has been used to delay reforms often in the past.

The 19th-century rich used to argue, for example, that chimney-sweeping did not do children any harm, and that they emerged unscathed from the experience. For quite a long time reformers were unable to collect enough evidence to contravert this complacent assumption. Accidents, it seemed, were very few. In the end, of course, sufficient evidence was collected and the practice was proved to be dangerous. But what strikes the modern mind as odd, and disgraceful, is that a practice which was so obviously cruel and harmful should have escaped prohibition for so long on the ground that its harmfulness could not be proved.

Nor is this an isolated example of how the demand for statistical evidence and scientific demonstration can be a smoke-screen behind which abuses take refuge long after their harm is obvious to inexpert eyes. Time and time again dominant liberal opinion in 19th-century Britain silenced humanitarian concern about the process of industrialisation with the argument that no harm could be proved. Why should the mill-owners and the mine-owners not do this, that, or the other, since the harm that might ensue was

The Death of Textbook Sexism

SOMEBODY *has got to rescue us from the women's liberation movement, for instance, to cope with Scott, Foresman and Company. They are the big textbook publishers, and I have here a pamphlet issued by the company called "Guidelines for Improving the Image of Women in Textbooks." How do you define sexism? "Sexism refers to all those attitudes and actions which relegate women to a secondary and inferior status in society . . ." The editors warn against stereotypes. "For example, writers should take care that a joke about a woman who is a bad driver, a shrewish mother-in-law, financially inept, etc., does not present these qualities as typical of women as a group."*

THE EDITORS GIVE *examples of sexist language, and, opposite, examples of how to correct the abuse.*

For instance, "early man." That should be "early humans." "When man invented the wheel . . ." should become "When people invented the wheel . . ." Now of course this is something we might be able to get away with when discussing pre-historical inventions. But Scott Foresman funk the historical problem, unless they are prepared to recommend: "When the Wright people invented the airplane," or "When the Ford human invented the car." Will no one tell the people at Scott Foresman about the synecdoche?

"Businessmen" is out: "business people" is in. Presumably the singular is a "business person." What do you want to be when you grow up, Johnny? A business person. What do you do with "repairmen"? Not even Scott Foresman dared come up with "repairperson," so they offer: "someone to repair the . . ." which can be spotted as a syntactical copout in sexist and non-sexist societies.

The use of the pronoun "he" to do androgynous duty is out. For instance, you can't say, "The motorist should slow down if he is hailed by the police." You have to say: "The motorist should slow down if he or she is hailed by the police" (or policewoman?).

THEY ARE SO CARRIED AWAY, *over at Scott Foresman, that they appear to have lost all sense of inflection. For instance, the sexist "The ancient Egyptians allowed women considerable control over property" has got to be changed to "Women in ancient Egypt had considerable control over property"—which is, very simply, a totally different statement from the first.*

Will they ever make a concession? Yes. "In some cases, it is necessary to refer to a woman's sex, as in the sentence: 'The works of female authors are too often omitted from anthologies'." I don't know how you could come up with a permissible way of saying: "The works of female authors are too often included in anthologies." I guess you just can't think that. "Galileo was the astronomer who discovered the moons of Jupiter. Marie Curie was the beautiful chemist who discovered radium." WRONG. Try: "Galileo was the handsome astronomer who discovered the moons of Jupiter. Marie Curie was the beautiful chemist who discovered radium." But what if Galileo was ugly? Or, heaven forfend, what if Galileo was really handsome and Marie Curie was really ugly (which I happen to know was the case)?

Miss Germaine Greer had better hurry. Her movement is gravely imperilled by the boys at . . . I mean, the boys and girls at, Scott, Foresman and Company.

William F. Buckley, Jr.

in the INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE (*Paris*)

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far too uncertain to justify any limitation on the sacred principle of freedom? In many cases, as we know, the harm could only be proved to the satisfaction of Royal Commissions and academic studies far too late for it to be remedied—harm that was obvious to such reformers as Lord Shaftesbury, who relied on common sense, long before it could be statistically demonstrated.

Reformers in the 19th century were constantly being rebuked by reactionary polemicists writing in *The Times* about the danger of cranky humanitarianism getting in the way of progress and freedom (in very much the same tone as Mr Levin rebukes Lord Longford). They, too, would sanctimoniously take Lord Shaftesbury to task for not waiting for the report of some Royal Commission which Governments had no intention of setting up, adding, for good measure (not unlike Mr Levin today) that while they did not doubt Lord Shaftesbury's and his group's good intentions, their writings would be used by the unthinking, the demagogic, the freedom-hating and the malevolent to bolster the demands for further restrictions on production, distribution and exchange.

The Sexual Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, and the criticisms and anxiety they inspire, can quite usefully be compared, since both would seem to bring out the weakness of the progressive mind. Surely we must try to understand why and how the 19th-century liberal persuaded himself to condone, tolerate and applaud what were then the new economic freedoms, the dangers of which were only apparent to the cranks and the seers. Those who in, say 1850, looked ahead and warned that the social cost of the Industrial Revolution would be a terrible price to pay in the *intangibles* of a civilised polity could not then quantify their fears, or demonstrate that working in a factory or living in a slum did people any harm. The dominant enlightened view then was that economic freedom, won with such difficulty, was far too precious a prize to put at risk because of highly arguable propositions about possible future damage to society as a whole. The principle of freedom was at stake, and if private enterprise was interfered with this would be an excuse for the State to reimpose all the trappings of old-fashioned tyranny.

A century later it is easy enough for us to see how narrow and dogmatic was this liberal unwillingness to make any imaginative effort to understand the possible evil of the industrial revolution. "Prove it!", they retorted, unmindful of the fact that by the time it could be proved it was well-nigh beyond being cured. Is it wholly fanciful to see in contemporary liberalism the same kind of doctrinaire blindness and bigotry? Prove that pornography is harmful. Prove that the sexual revolution may result in evil. Prove that little children are harmed by the soot of smut or the fumes of erotica. And if you can't prove it, stop interfering, unless you want to stand condemned as the enemy of freedom and the ally of reaction.

BUT, AS I SAY, these things cannot be proved or demonstrated. It was possible eventually to prove and demonstrate that pushing little children up chimneys was an undesirable practice, because eventually some of them died through suffocation. But what if these accidents had not taken place? What if the only harm had been psychological, wounded minds rather than suffocated bodies? And what if a Royal Commission, miraculously endowed with modern technology, after carrying out laboratory tests on boys who had been used as chimney-sweeps and on others who had not, concluded that there was not much to choose between them? Or even that the chimney-sweeps had higher IQs than those who had not been so used? And better health and stronger biceps as well? Would the Bernard Levins of the day have argued that the case against sending children up chimneys had not been made, and that those who exploited them in this fashion should be permitted to continue so to do?

Or take again the issue of bear-baiting and cock-fighting. Our 18th-century forbears found nothing wrong with these sports, just as Mr Bernard Levin finds nothing wrong with pornographic spectacles today. But their 19th-century successors came to a different conclusion. They decided that bear-baiting and cock-fighting were cruel to the animals taking part and degrading to the human being who gained pleasure from the spectacle. But how did they reach this conclusion? Not by psychological tests on beasts or humans. They did not take a group of humans who had witnessed these spectacles and compare their reactions with those who had not, or carry out other kinds of psychological tests. If they had, one must doubt whether these sports would ever have been banned, since the chances are that the research might well have demonstrated that far from those attending them being more prone to aggression or any other ill effect, they were less so than those who stayed away. No, what our 19th-century forbears did was to do what Lord Longford is castigated by Mr Levin for doing, in the case of pornography. They banned bear-baiting and cock-fighting because they found them disgusting, without waiting for expert opinion to prove the unprovable.

And to the best of my knowledge Mr Levin does not think them wrong for having done so.

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Nor would he presumably advocate the re-legalisation of such barbarous practices, if sufficient academic studies were forthcoming with evidence as to their total harmlessness.

OR TAKE the late Roman habit of gladiatorial combat.

Let us ponder on this question for a moment. Imagine that some Senator Longford of the day has produced a Report urging the banning of gladiatorial contests on the ground that killing for entertainment, for fun, even between consenting adults, was manifestly wrong, since killing was only justifiable and even noble when done in the pursuit of some socially admirable aim, like the upholding of the law or the defence of the Republic. To debase this supreme act for purposes of popular pleasure was, therefore, anti-social. Oh what sport a Roman Levin would have had with such kill-joy rubbish! Did not the silly Senator realise that it was nonsense to imagine that killing had to have a social purpose, since it could be enjoyed enormously in a whole host of ways outside the restrictive categories referred to? The Senator's talk about killing being wrong was responsible for a lot of unnecessary guilt, etc., and was depriving all sorts of people of a great deal of enjoyment, which nobody yet had demonstrated to be harmful. In any case, these public spectacles, by allowing the public to sate their bloodlust vicariously, probably reduced rather than increased the amount of private violence.

And how the Roman intelligentsia of the period would have cheered. These were precisely their sentiments. Today, of course, they sound absurd. But they only sound absurd because of certain moral values about the sanctity of human life which we, unlike the Romans, take for granted. But they are not moral values that can be proved or demonstrated in a way likely to satisfy a Royal Commission, any more than sexual values can be proved or demonstrated in this fashion.

WHICH BRINGS ME BACK to the Longford Report proper. It was not unaware of the pleasure that sex can procure, any more than the imaginary Roman report would have been unaware of all the pleasures of violence. What it was concerned to do was to emphasise the desirability for this immensely powerful human appetite to be given some moral dimension. What was so disturbing about the general London reaction was its total unwillingness, or inability, to accept the propriety or even relevance of this concern. Listen to Mr Levin's fury:

> Worse, however, than the muddled thinking, the slovenly organisation, the rambling, confused and repeatedly untenable argument, is the basic assumption on which the entire book rests, which is that sexual pleasure is only obtainable and certainly only permissible when accompanied by love. "Sex only works properly", says one of those who wrote to the group, and whose views are quoted with evident approval and agreement in the report, "if the person you are having it with is someone you care so deeply about that you will stay around to have the children who may come. . . ." The fact that the claim is not only untrue but manifestly ridiculous does not seem to have occurred to Lord Longford and his colleagues. It is in fact largely the attitude represented by Lord Longford and the rest of his army of banners that has made so many people unable to enjoy sexual relationships outside society's permissible categories or frequently inside them either.

Now of course Lord Longford and his group do not believe that copulation and all the other forms of sexual activity are not pleasurable without love, any more than his imaginary Roman precursor would have imagined that fighting and killing could not be supremely exciting and ecstatic activities, even without noble aims. The argument in both cases is normative rather than descriptive: namely that human beings should be encouraged to have an attitude to sex that causes them to enjoy it most within certain morally desirable categories, such as between those in love or those desirous of producing children, just as it is desirable for human beings to be brought up with morally-inspired

Backlash

London

METAPHORICS: *With Mrs Mary Whitehouse on sentry duty in the public gallery, it was to be hoped that all entendres in the Lords yesterday would remain undoubled. Given the debate's subject—the Earl of Longford's pornography report—much self-denial was, therefore, expected of their lordships, as well as of anyone attempting to describe the proceedings. In the end, the House did not disgrace itself.*

Phrases capable of imaginative interpretation by the more baroque minds among us averaged out at only around one a speech. About par for the course, I would say.

Admittedly, the Bishop of Leicester, Dr Williams, introducing the debate, did call for the Longford legal proposals to be given "a fair crack of the whip."

But I rather suspect that this was a naughty, episcopal joke—the sort of thing that has them in stitches at the Athenaeum—designed to set Press gallery pens racing, which ploy was entirely successful in the case of this reporter.

For the Bishop swiftly added: "If that is not an unfortunate metaphor."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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restrictive attitudes to the taking of human life.

Nobody would deny that society *could* bring its members up to find their greatest pleasure in sadistic sex, if this was its aim. Or in infertile sex, if that was its aim, just as society could induce its members to admire all forms of killing, instead of restricting its admiration only to those who do it for their country, or for some other altruistic cause. The point which the Longford Report makes about sex is that, given the traditional sexual upbringing, most people find the act most pleasurable when the carnal delight is joined by emotional affinity, when the pleasure enjoyed by the body is also in line with what the heart, mind or soul believes to be right. By the same token, their carnal pleasure is marred when they feel morally guilty about it, which those brought up on the traditional manner tend to do when love is absent.

The liberal response seems to have missed the point here rather crassly and they are not even consistent. On the one hand they appear to dismiss the Longford view that sex only works properly "if the person you are having it with is someone about whom you care deeply . . . " as "not only untrue but manifestly ridiculous." Yet, on the other, they go on to complain that it is precisely because of this Longford view that "so many people are unable to enjoy sexual relations outside society's permissible categories." Surely this complaint implicitly suggests that for many the Longford view about sex without love is not "manifestly ridiculous." It is clear from what the critics have written that far from really finding it untrue they find it deplorable but all too true. In their view, far too many people *are* inhibited from happy illicit sex with people whom they do not love and do not want to bring up children with.

THE IDEOLOGUES OF PERMISSIVENESS may want to change this. They may want to see more carefree sex outside marriage, more casual fornication. They are perfectly at liberty so to advocate. But the Longford group do not want this. They see much virtue in a social attitude to sex which encourages people to enjoy its pleasures in socially desirable ways. This, of course, is a central part of their concern about pornography: that it is likely—or so common sense would conclude—to weaken these taboos and inhibitions discouraging promiscuous sex. Mr Levin as much as admits this. He accuses those who oppose pornography of preventing so many from enjoying sex outside society's permissible categories. But surely he must see that this accusation makes nonsense of his claim that pornography is not harmful, since there seems no doubt in his mind that it does promote sexual indulgence outside the socially acceptable categories. He may say that he wants to change these categories. But at least he should be prepared to admit that from the point of view of those who accept these categories pornography manifestly is harmful. A revolutionary can argue that he wants to create a new world. But he is either very silly or very hypercritical if he denies that his intention is to harm the old one.

Yet the permissive faction seems quite incapable of appreciating such an obvious point. It seems to think it has totally destroyed the Longford view by pointing out the obvious truth that a lot of people can enjoy sexual ecstasy in categories of coupling that would make Lord Longford's hair stand on end, had he any to do so. Of course Lord Longford realises this, This is what worries him. It is precisely because the sexual urge itself knows no boundaries that all societies seek to peg them out, with certain areas placed out of bounds: out of bounds not because individuals may not want to go there but because it is better for society as a whole if they are restrained or rather brought up to restrain themselves.

THE ARGUMENT ABOUT pornography is largely an argument about what these boundaries should be. If one takes the view that the family is the basic unit of society, and should be preserved as such, then it is reasonable to conclude that society has an interest in preserving an attitude to sex that promotes this cause. This means inducing taboos and inhibitions which militate against promiscuous sex, which means in turn indoctrinating people with certain moral reflexes that associate sex with love, so that those who indulge only for carnal pleasure suffer guilt and only those who copulate within marriage find it easy to reach that pinnacle of ecstasy wherein physical pleasure is deepened and extended by moral exaltation. Surely it cannot be denied that a society which allows the open display and dissemination of pornography without let or hindrance, which allows the sex act to be performed in public for purposes of popular entertainment, will be less likely to achieve this end than one that does not.

Another obviously legitimate social concern about sex is the way in which its uses can influence man's idea of himself. Many societies have argued that pornography militates against the dignity of man, because the pornographic portrayal of the sexual act tends to capture its animality without being able to do justice to its emotional inspiration. Few, I think, would deny that much pornography does tend to present a dehumanised picture of sex, thereby debasing the

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dignity of man. This danger was certainly recognised in Nazi Germany, where the vilest pornography was officially encouraged as a means of destroying the hated idea of human individuality.

Contemporary revolutionaries are happy to admit this. They boast that pornography is far more effective an instrument for disrupting bourgeois society than Marxism, since it calls into question existing human relationships at a far deeper level and on a far wider front than any Marxist-Leninist economic analysis can hope to do. All this is so obvious that it scarcely needs saying. Yet it does need saying because just as an earlier generation of liberals hoodwinked the public into believing that Stalinism was about human freedom and Maoism about agrarian reform, so the present generation of liberals is hoodwinking the public that the argument about pornography is primarily about the freedom of artistic expression and whether Joe Bloggs should be permitted to enjoy his fair share of tit at the local cinema.

BUT IT IS NOT MY PURPOSE HERE so much to argue about pornography as to draw attention to certain dangers which the attacks on the Longford Report seem to me to illustrate. Liberalism is becoming the last refuge of the scoundrel, a smokescreen behind which a new breed of intellectual bully-boys gets away with almost anything. "My pornography, Right or Wrong", they proclaim, smearing those who think differently as traitors to the land of the free.

This is an ugly modern phenomenon which needs to be watched very carefully, since in many respects intolerance and arrogance and dogmatism supposedly in defence of freedom threaten free and open debate today far more insidiously than do their conservative counterparts in defence of authority. The traditional authoritarian virus can be relied upon to produce its own antidote almost automatically. If a single voice is raised in the media, for example, advocating censorship, a hundred others will instantly drown it out with quotations from Milton and Mill, their mental process being scarcely more subtle than that which prompted Goering to reach for his revolver whenever he heard the word culture. They simply know as an article of faith that censorship is wrong, advocated only by evil people who would be prepared to put Jews in the gas oven. The letters I received once after writing an article in support of a measure of censorship were filled with a degree of hate and hysterical abuse from those with progressive views which no article opposing censorship would ever be likely nowadays to provoke from those with reactionary views.

The point that needs emphasising surely is that today unthinking prejudice, certainty of rectitude, contempt for the opposite view, a willingness even to suppress the opposite view, can be found just as much on the libertarian side of the fence as on the authoritarian; and whereas on the authoritarian side such attitudes are for the most part confined to the least educated and sophisticated, on the libertarian side they are to be found at their most extreme and hysterical among the most educated and sophisticated.

IT MAY BE OBJECTED THAT libertarian intolerance and fanaticism do not matter very much because nobody gets locked up as a result of them. A score of abusive letters is quite a different thing from being put in the Bastille, etc. But this kind of objection, far from disarming my contention, merely underlines it. It is precisely because everybody is so acutely aware of the dangers of intellectual authoritarianism of the reactionary variety—history and the contemporary world having borne such spectacular witness to them—that they are far less sinister than libertarian intellectual authoritarianism, about the menace of which few are yet aware. But we should be aware, because today it is the liberals who enjoy a near-monopoly of the media, who are usually in a position to impose their orthodoxy, who command most of the powerful propaganda weapons, who dominate education at almost all levels. The danger of reactionaries effectively stifling free debate in a traditionally repressive manner does not need to be taken seriously, except in the event of some hypothetical backlash situation which only an economic crisis of major proportions would be likely to produce. But the danger of liberals stifling free debate—not in the traditionally repressive manner, but in ways that are scarcely less effective—does need to be taken seriously, since it is already happening. And happening in a way, moreover, that is exceedingly difficult to resist, since all the arguments and sacred texts needed to inspire and fortify resistance are in the hands of the very progressive Establishment against which the resistance should be aimed.

NEVER HAS A REIGNING Establishment been so safe from the assaults of free speech as the present liberal one. Instead of the artistic and creative elements of society being ranged against it, they are a loyal, militant and integral part of it. All the naturally rebellious forces of society, instead of battering at its walls, are inside the new fortress of power defending its ramparts. The ammunition of freedom normally used to destroy the certitudes of intellectual dogmatism is in this case being used to uphold it. Nor is this a

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danger only in the area of sexual morality. Professor Eysenck, for example, recently wrote in ENCOUNTER how the Jensen research into race and genetics was ruthlessly attacked by the liberal academic Establishments on both sides of the Atlantic, because its findings seemed to endanger progressive certitudes about race. His findings were not censored or repressed. For that is not how the new Establishment works. But they were frowned upon, excoriated, caricatured, "framed" with moral disapproval, which has the same effect as censorship without appearing to do so and without arousing any of the popular odium which overt censorship immediately provokes.[1] The watchdogs of freedom do not bark when liberal certitudes are ruthelssly protected from the ravages of truth-telling because they are trained, like Pavlov's dogs, to react only to certain stimuli—*i.e.*, the customary threats to intellectual freedom, which are assumed to come only from Right-wing reactionaries.

The result is a society in which a whole range of views that are currently unpopular and heretical do not get a fair and proper hearing, since as soon as they begin to appear on the horizon a barrage of moral abuse and intellectual mockery falls upon them which makes rational debate virtually impossible.

THIS HAPPENED, in my submission, to the Longford Report. Right from the moment that the study group was set up it received the kind of treatment from the media which was certain to minimise its influence while boosting its sales. It was anathematised by the liberal Establishment as being a product of the forces of darkness which the faithful should eschew if they valued their immortal souls. It was put, so to speak, on an invisible Index, denied the official imprimatur of progressive approval. Not that this treatment affected public curiosity. But putting books on the Index never does. What it does do, however, is to stifle rational debate.

The case against the spread of pornography is one that deserves the most serious attention. Only wilful and blind dogmatism would insist that some form of censorship cannot be respectably considered in this context without those who do so being burnt at the stake of public ridicule. What deeply worries me is that the reigning liberal establishment is so armoured with self-righteousness, so confident in its certitudes, so fanatical about its faith, so proud of its prejudices, that it simply cannot conceive that it might be wrong.

Other Establishments have suffered from all these faults. But the trouble about this one is that those—the natural iconoclasts and rebels—who ought by training and talent to be condemning its arrogance are instead its apologists. All power tends to corrupt, warned a famous liberal. Is it not time that the libertarian Establishment began at least to consider whether this truth may apply to them, perhaps even particularly to them?

[1] The withdrawal of Leeds University's honorary degree to the Nobel Prize winner, Professor William Shockley, well illustrates these distasteful tactics.

Irish Poetry

Impasto or washes as a rule:
Tuberous clottings, a muddy
Accumulation, internal rhyme—
Fuchsia's droop towards the ground,
The potato and its flower:

Or a continuing drizzle,
Specialisations of light,
Bog water stretched over sand
In small waves, elisions—
The dialects of silence:

Or, sometimes, in combination
Outlining the bent spines,
The angular limbs of creatures—
Lost minerals colouring
The initial letter, the stance.

Michael Longley

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LETTERS

Was Cromwell an Iconoclast?

As Mr Max Beloff has now tacitly withdrawn his charges that I have invented facts, and that *The Offshore Islanders* is "an anti-European manifesto" [ENCOUNTER, March], I need not take up more of your space, except to dispose of his assertion that Oliver Cromwell was an iconoclast.

This point is more important than it seems at first sight. Cromwell has always posed a problem to conservative historiography. Though undeniably a radical hero, he cannot be accused of lack of patriotism or courage or administrative ability. Instead he has been damned as a destroyer of church property and an enemy of the arts. The charges were made at the time, chiefly in such Royalist propaganda sheets as the *Mercurius Aulicus* and the *Mercurius Rusticus*, and they have been repeated ever since. They are examined by G. F. Nuttall in "Was Cromwell an Iconoclast?" (*Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, XII), and by Alan Smith: "The Image of Cromwell in Folklore and Tradition" (*Folklore*, 79, Spring 1968). In her forthcoming biography, *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men*, Antonia Fraser gives a judicious summary of the evidence, such as it is. That Cromwell "slighted" castles is true; he had sound military reasons for doing so, though his demolition work is much smaller than is usually supposed. On a few occasions he is known to have stabled horses in churches, a practice of both sides during the Civil War. At Ely Cathedral, in January 1644, he forbade elaborate choir services, since some of his troops believed music should be confined to secular use, and he feared they would get out of hand; when his orders were disobeyed he dispersed the congregation. He was later accused of pulling down the north transept of the Cathedral's great west tower, which had in fact collapsed in the 14th century. Other specific acts of vandalism attributed to him have similarly doubtful origins.

Mr Beloff will not be able, I think, to point to any instance, documented by objective contemporary evidence, where he ordered his men to destroy church images. Why should he? He was not an iconoclast. Most of the stories about him are based on a confusion between Oliver and his illustrious namesake and distant relation, Thomas (though Thomas Cromwell was not an iconoclast either). The real damage occurred in the 16th century, when Henry VIII began the process by pillaging the shrine of Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. It gathered pace on Rogation Day, 1548, when many public crosses were pulled down, and it received official sanction in May 1550, when Bishop Ridley of London enjoined his clergy and churchwardens to remove the altars. Probably the worst damage occurred during these years, under the Duke of Northumberland, though the destruction was resumed in 1559, shortly after the accession of Queen Elizabeth. The worst offenders were Calvinistic clergymen, such as Dean Horne of Durham, and Bishop Pilkington of Durham, who left this most splendid of English cathedrals, in Dr A. L. Rowse's words, "a magnificent architectural shell of what it once was."

If Oliver Cromwell is to be saddled with the responsibility for the actions of parliamentary committees, Queen Elizabeth must carry a much heavier burden; but who would call her an iconoclast? In fact, the strict discipline Cromwell imposed on his troops helped to limit the damage incurred in the course of his operations. He was a moderate and tolerant man; as Protector he was a discerning patron of the arts. Accusations against him are chiefly to be found in old church histories, where the ravages of the Reformation years, and indeed of time and weather, are attributed to his deliberate policy. Such local pamphlets, now increasingly rare, were written by well-meaning but ignorant and prejudiced clergymen.

I am sorry to see Mr Beloff falling for these ancient *canards*.

PAUL JOHNSON

Copthall,
Iver, Bucks.

I CANNOT THINK why Mr Johnson believes I have "tacitly" withdrawn the views about his book I expressed in my review. Indeed, since he proved unable to argue against any of the principal points of substance I made, my opinions about it were, if anything, confirmed by his first communication. For that reason, I saw no need to burden your readers by repeating my original criticisms with which they are more than welcome to compare Mr Johnson's rejoinder.

Not sharing the "great man" view of history, Cromwell's personal attitude towards the graphic arts seems to me a matter of minor interest. He may well not have been an iconoclast at all. It is true that many examples of destructiveness were wrongly attributed to the Puritans of the Interregnum whereas they were really the work of their 16th-century ideological predecessors. It remains the fact that Puritanism itself was *doctrinally* iconoclastic, and that there are documented incidents of actual destruction such as that depicted in the contemporary painting to which I referred. It may also be indicative of the contemporary reputation of the Parliamentary armies that they got saddled, even if unjustly, with the blame for activities of this kind.

What Mr Johnson certainly cannot deny is that the Civil War is regarded by art historians as having brought to an end a great flowering of English culture of which end the dispersal of the splendid royal collection of works of art may stand as an appropriate symbol.

MAX BELOFF

All Souls College,
Oxford

Eysenck & "The New Zealots"

PROFESSOR EYSENCK is right. "Jensen's paper was very long, and very technical" [ENCOUNTER, December].

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I tried to read it. What then must a "liberal academic", who is neither a truly competent judge nor an unresisting imbecile, do? This one turned to Eysenck on Jensen and was prepared to trust him. Now I feel a right twit in a quandary. How could I have trusted a man who, having shown in 1945 that "tough-minded people from Right and Left shared certain personality traits, such as aggressiveness, violence, and mental rigidity", can write in 1972 without a sign of tongue in cheek that the appearance of such traits "among those who claimed to be on the Left... was a great shock to me."

As a social anthropologist who not only (*pace* the signatories to the Resolution on Scientific Freedom) tries "to give responsible weight to heredity" in his work but also tries to persuade his sociological colleagues to bring cool minds to bear on hot potatoes, I find Eysenck's turgid complaint of a *trahison des clercs* itself an unhelpful and self-pitying betrayal of rationality.

J. B. LOUDON
Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology
University College,
Swansea

MR LOUDON considers himself "a right twit in a quandary."

I do not quite understand the nature of his quandary. One may feel that a certain person has personality traits such as aggressiveness, violence, and mental rigidity—and yet be somewhat surprised and shocked when the person in question rapes and kills a baker's dozen of vestal virgins. Furthermore, I had not found any proof in the work leading to my book on *The Psychology of Politics* that tough-minded Left-wingers in Western countries would be as ready as the Fascists and Nazis to make use of lies (the bigger the better), to prefer unreason to reason, and generally to disport themselves in quite the way that I described in my article.

Mr Loudon finds my complaints of *trahison des clercs* "turgid." I am sure his dictionary must have let him down in his choice of words. Whatever may have been wrong with my complaint, "turgid" is hardly the right word. Nor do I quite understand how he makes out that a complaint which is essentially an appeal to reason can be called "a betrayal of rationality."

H. J. EYSENCK
Institute of Psychiatry,
Maudsley Hospital,
London

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AUTHORS

E. J. Mishan's article is an adaptation of two talks given in the U.S. during the autumn of 1972 to the staff and students of Lehigh University and Yale University respectively. . . .

Samuel Brittan is economic commentator of the *Financial Times*, and author of *Steering the Economy* and *The Price of Economic Freedom* (Macmillan, 1970). . . .

Robert Lowell has been Professor of Literature at the University of Essex since 1970. Three new volumes of his poems—*The Dolphin*, *History*, and *For Lizzie and Harriet*—will be published simultaneously this summer (Faber & Faber). . . .

Jonathan Raban is a free-lance writer. He has written plays and short stories for television and radio, and is the author, among other books, of *The Society of the Poem* (Harrap, 1971). He is just completing a book on living in cities. . . .

Roy Fuller is Professor of Poetry, University of Oxford; his lectures on poetry, *Owls and Artificers*, appeared in 1971 (André Deutsch and The Library Press, New York). His most recent volume of poetry, *Tiny Tears*, will be published later this year. . . .

George MacBeth published his *Collected Poems* in 1971; his most recent book of poems is *Shrapnel* (Macmillan). He has been a BBC Producer, chiefly responsible for literary broadcasts, since 1955. . . .

Frank Tuohy was Visiting Professor at Waseda University in Tokyo from 1964–67. He has published various volumes of fiction, including *The Ice Saints* (1964) and *Fingers in the Door* (1970). . . .

Peregrine Worsthorne is deputy editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* and author of *The Socialist Myth* (1971). . . .

Gillian Tindall's first collection of short stories, *Dances of Death*, will be published this summer by Hodder and Stoughton. *Fly Away Home*, her fifth novel, won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1972; she is now working on a biographical study of George Gissing. . . .

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London

TOMORROW IS WORSE: One more example of the admirable Hutber's Law—"Improvement means Deterioration"—comes in a Post Office notice stating that "Owing to modernisation this office will be closed on Saturdays until further notice."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Jerusalem

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: *William Shakespeare has just received an educational rebuff from the State of Israel. The country's Education Ministry has just decided to eliminate the Bard from the syllabus of its high schools. And in his place will follow an emphasis on the more contemporary prose of George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Arthur Miller.*

Israel's Inspector of English studies, Mr Rafael Gefen, is quite dogmatic: "We have immersed ourselves so much in the analysis of Shakespeare's works that we forgot that English is a living language. We would be far better if we learned to understand everyday English, read a newspaper, and order a cup of coffee from an English-speaking waiter."

English is the main foreign (non-Hebrew) language taught in Israel's schools—and Shakespeare's plays have been an essential part of the study programme.

But could it be that, on closer examination, Shakespeare is less than flattering in his portrayal of the Jew in his plays? In The Merchant of Venice, *for instance, Shylock is a grasping, revenge-obsessed usurer. Lord David Cecil, formerly Goldsmith's Professor of English Literature at Oxford, tells me that Shakespeare clearly objected to Jewry on religious grounds.*

"I don't think there's a question of racism. It was a sin in those days to make interest from loans. But Shylock's daughter married a Christian—so it was all right."

Of the literary trio to replace Shakespeare, the choice of Beckett, as a guide to contemporary English, seems the most bizarre. He is an Irishman who writes his plays in French.

DAILY MAIL

London

COOKEING THE EVIDENCE: *I was greatly charmed [John Crosby writes] by the first of Alistair Cooke's America series for the BBC, which is intended, I gather, to do for the United States what Kenneth Clark did for civilisation. (Put it on the map.) Cooke, I predict, will give Clark quite a run for his title (head BBC Culture Monger). He can write, which is not Clark's strong point; he has humour, which Clark hasn't, and he doesn't, as Clark certainly did, look down his nose at the viewer.*

Of course, Cooke's view of America is not the currently fashionable one of the cocktail party Left. The Guardian, *Cooke's own paper, assigned two—not one but* two*—of these fashionable leftist thinkers, Bernard Nossiter, London correspondent of the* Washington Post, *and Martin Walker, from its own stable of US correspondents, to torpedo Cooke, an incredibly ungracious thing to do to a man who has been the* Guardian's *distinguished American correspondent for 40 years.*

Both indulged in what I call "Yes But" criticism, discussing not what is in the series but what isn't—which is to say, their own fashionable prejudices. Why, asked Walker, no mention of the child death-rate in Chicago? A good point. This same omission always spoils the Mona Lisa for me. The child death-rate in Florence at the time was appalling and you'd think a great painter like Leonardo could have found space on the painting for it somewhere, wouldn't you?

Walker closed by saying he "barely recognised" Cooke's America. I imagine he wouldn't. The Guardian's *America, especially as reported by Peter Jenkins (thoroughly savaged by Bernard Levin for his especially idiotic pieces after the US election) is a special branch of fiction bearing about as much relationship to the facts as* Izvestia's *America.* Guardian *reporters, it strikes me, know what they are expected to find, and, by George, they don't deviate a hair's-breadth.*

THE OBSERVER

Rome

LATIN GRAFFITO IS A PALINDROME: *Scholars of antiquity and addicts of word play rejoice! A long-forgotten palindrome has been found among the Latin graffiti scrawled on the walls of a tavern of the Roman imperial age that is being explored by archaeologists. A palindrome is a word or phrase reading the same forward and backward, like "madam."*

The newly found Latin specimen is "Roma summus amor" *("Rome supreme love".)*

The Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, *announcing the discovery, said the palindrome was "quite new," meaning new to the present age. The tavern was part of a food market, identified as the Macellum Liviae. Its ruins were located in recent excavations under the present Basilica of St. Mary Major, one of Rome's largest churches.*

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Ilford

PARODY: An Ilford schoolboy has won £250-worth of library books for his school and £500 for himself.

Jon Margolis, 17, a pupil at Bancroft's School, is the winner of the Schools' Writing Competition run by The Spectator Magazine and will be given the money by Education Secretary Mrs Margaret Thatcher, this month.

The story with which he won the £750 is called "1984"—a parody of the novel of the same name by George Orwell—and tells a tale of democracy gone mad. "It's about a repressive liberal state in which everyone is obliged by law to oppose the government," explained Jon.

EVENING STANDARD

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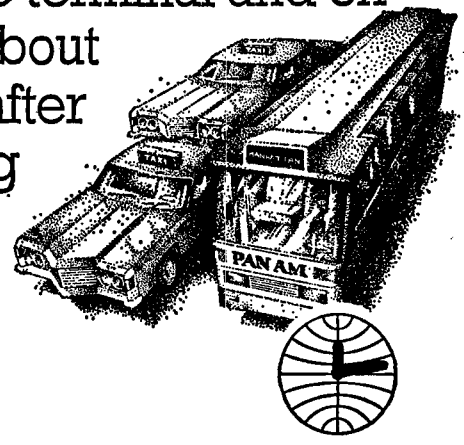

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